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JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1982

BANDWAGON



THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Vol. 26, No. 1

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THIS MONTH'S COVER

One of the best known and longest used titles in circus history is Gentry Bros. The first Gentry Bros. Dog & Pony Show toured in 1888, the name continued in use, under various owners, through the 1934 season.

From 1900 to 1904 the Gentry's operated four different shows, using 72 railroad cars. In 1905 and 1906, two units toured, in 1907 three shows from 1908 to 1914 two shows and by 1915 and 1916 the original brothers had only one show.

The courier on the front and back covers of this issue was used in 1905. It is reproduced in the original two colors. Pfening collection.

1982 CONVENTION UPDATE

A full and varied convention program is promised CHS members attending the 1982 gathering in Washington, D.C., April 22-25. The activities will begin with registration and a pre-show "concert" of

circus movies on Wednesday evening, April 21 at the hotel. The following days will include a one ring show and other circus related events which are part of the Smithsonian's Spring Celebration.

As in the past, a number of historical papers will be presented. Among them is a session on the history of juggling, and a slide lecture on dressage riding in the 19th century. A special highlight is a paper on the Barnum & Bailey parade of 1903-1904 accompanied by a never before seen moving picture of the 1904 parade.

The official convention hotel is the Key Bridge Marriott, just across the Potomac River at 1401 Lee Highway, Arlington, Virginia 22209 (phone 703-524-6400). Special convention rates are \$55 per room, whether single or double occupancy, an extremely attractive rate for a major city during its peak vacation season.

Registration, including all sessions and one seat at the banquet, is \$37.50 (after

April 5, the price is \$42.50); one additional banquet ticket per registration for a member's spouse is \$20.00. Upon receipt of the registration fee, an acknowledgment and hotel reservation card with the special convention rates will be mailed to you. Make checks payable to the Circus Historical Society and send them to Richard W. Flint, CHS Convention, P.O. Box 23574 L'Enfant Plaza Station, Washington, D.C. 20024.

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Williamsport, Pa. 17701

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The Circus Year in Review

1981 Season

By Albert F. House

The 1981 season started out with a new President, a new outlook on the nation, and an entirely new economic package for the nation. Under President Reagan, the U.S. federal spending was to be cut by billions of dollars, taking federal money out of many social, welfare, educational and local projects. All this was done with balancing the federal budget in mind. While President Reagan had his way, the economy became weaker. Newspaper columnists began to speculate what would happen to the economy when the spending cuts were felt. When the cuts actually were felt, during the summer, economists predicted that the nation was going into a major recession. And how right they were! However, while inflation was decreased when compared to the Carter administration and interest rates were down, unemployment was up. In this economic climate in 1981 circuses operated with mixed results.

Because the economy remained recessed, some circuses continued the use of telephone promotions. By using this method of advance selling of tickets, the show owners were assured of some gross revenues in the bank even before show day. Some circuses used a variety of promotions, combining telephone sales with strictly the old fashioned lot and license deal. This latter advance work was resorted to by at least one major circus after the Indiana territory had been subjected to a fraudulent promotion involving a circus that never materialized. Fortunately the alleged promoter was caught, but nevertheless, the territory was burned, much to the dismay of the legitimate show.

Four major circuses, the two Ringling units, Vargas and Beatty-Cole use marketing and promotion techniques to sell the circuses to the public, such as tie-ins with new auto dealers or fast food chains. Since state and local governments may severely regulate telephone solicitations and they have operating areas that may be questionable, those promoters may be liable to criminal prosecution, these bigger shows have eliminated these practices entirely. Some smaller shows are contemplating or are using the marketing techniques, namely Hoxie Bros., as ads have appeared in a trade paper, and Franzen Bros., which does use people.

Although marketing techniques eliminate the possibility of criminal prosecution, if the marketing director is unable to produce the desired



The side show of the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., April 1-3, 1981. Arnold Brito Photo.

results, then the show doesn't have a profitable stand. If the economy of the town doesn't respond to the techniques, or if there are better directors from competing attractions, then again the circus's stand in town isn't profitable. With the economy being recessed, often the economy of a town will not support more than one attraction.

Major circuses, using these marketing and promotion techniques seemingly have suffered from the recessed economy. The quarterly reports of the owners of Ringling circus confirm this premise. Suspicion of poor business is aroused by other major shows, too. Circus Vargas went to two day stands, didn't publish its route, competed with Beatty-Cole on the Texas Gulf coast, closed early and plans to open late in January, 1982, all practices contrary to its past performances. Beatty-Cole ran into financial difficulties after the show left New England, and was not able to recoup its potential during the months of October and November when business picked up on the way home. One

The marquee and concession trucks of the Carson & Barnes Circus on the lot in Delaware, Ohio, Aug. 6, 1981. Pfening Photo.



suspects that the rumor of the sale was due to the realized profits for the season.

However, no shows went broke due to lack of business. Some shows failed to reach their profit potential, and as a result had a poor season, but most showmen realized this was going to happen. As a result, 1982 should note a lot of changes in the advance promotion and advertising procedures of circuses. How successful the new year will be remains to be seen. No successful circus of the 1930's Depression is alive to predict what must be done to make a profit in very hard times.

An examination of the season will clarify these above mentioned points. Various showmen over the winter will divulge bits and pieces of their 1982 strategy. Even as this is written, a few hints have been revealed.

Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus

The 1981 outdoor, under canvas tour of the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus began March 15 in Florida after which the show headed north to its traditional Philadelphia Shrine date in late May. Along the way the show played the Apple Blossom Festival in Winchester, Va. Beatty-Cole broke its tradition somewhat by playing the Philadelphia date one week earlier than before and playing in Fairmont Park, heretofore restricted to tented circuses. From

Philadelphia the show played a few dates in Jersey and then headed to New England, where the show's profit making potential has been realized. This year was no exception. Playing June 12 to 25 in the Fall River, Mass. area for six two day stands in shopping centers, it headed north as far as a stand for two days in Maine. Turning around, the show played a few more stands in Massachusetts and went south. By August 1, the show was in Frackville, Pa. (Pottstown), by September 1 in Muscle Shoals, Ala., heading for Texas and the Rio Grande River valley. By Columbus Day the circus had reversed its route and was moving along the Texas Gulf coast into New Orleans, Nov. 1. A closing date of Nov. 20 in Sarasota was scheduled. The circus moved rapidly across the coast to the final four stands in Florida. While being interviewed in a Sarasota newspaper, majority stockholder Jerry Collins announced that the circus will actively seek a major indoor route for the 1982 season. On Friday Dec. 4, in a classified ad in the *Wall Street Journal*, the show was offered for sale. No price was mentioned, but common knowledge was that Collins didn't need the circus as one of his assets as he was in an unfavorable tax situation with it. In the meantime, rumors flew about the fate of the show.

For the second year, Beatty-Cole used its traditional four pole bale ring tent. This point was noted as the circus frequently purchased a new tent every year. The tent measures out to be a large 140+ foot round with three 48+ foot middle pieces. The side show tent, also in its second season is a 60 foot round with three 30 foot middle pieces. The circus carries 11 elephants but no lead stock. The big top uses three trucks for poles, canvas

and stakes, while six seat trailers are carried for all the general admission seating, and one semitrailer is carried for the reserved seats on both sides of the center ring. This arrangement allows one seat trailer to be dropped from the fleet while keeping up the gross revenue on the seating arrangements.

The performance uses the better parts of an aborted 1980 indoor winter tour equipment especially purchased for the tour. The tented performance, completely revamped from the previous year, is strengthened by more showmanship, running lights, follow spotlights where appropriate, an eight piece band with a musical tape to enhance its volume and to add other instruments and voices, and a full three ring display many times. The seating arrangements have two seat trailers on both sides of rings one and three, and two on the front end at the entrance. The back end is occupied by a huge backdoor curtain built on an iron frame which allows performers to keep out of the rain, but to be introduced with a flourish.

According to sources on the show, the 1981 season was not as prosperous one. Much of the profit from the New England tour was used to settle the legal suits brought against the show for cancelling building dates and advertising from the second half of the aborted winter tour. The Texas part of the tour was not as profitable as it had been in previous years. Also heavy opposition by Circus Vargas in the Gulf coast had hurt business. After the New Orleans stand, business began to pick up, but not enough to recoup the losses in the previous weeks. This might explain Collins' decision to change the format of the show and the rumors about the sale of the show.

Performers with the show included the Herriott family with their horses and dogs, John Welde and Co. with their bears, Dave Hoover with five tigers and six lions, and Fred Logan with the 11 elephants. Aerial acts included the Vasheks with a motorcycle and high wire presentation, the flying act of the Alvarez's, and the single acts of Cindy Herriott and Tina Storey, who fell in March during her act and was hospitalized for about six weeks, and the Munoz family cradle acts. Ground acrobatic performers consist of the new troupe of the Oscarrians doing a casting and teeterboard turn, the Estradas balancing acts and the Verdu's rolling globe acts. The performance also has an opening parade, a new innovation for this year, and a clown fantasy as a production number, also new. Both ideas were from the indoor tour. The performance as a whole was stronger on showmanship than in past years.

The circus is loaded on 30 trucks, all semitrailers but five, which are straight trucks that pull trailers. Labor saving devices include a two reel canvas spool, a mechanical stake driver, and a forklift vehicle capable of heavy loads. Alabama plates were used.

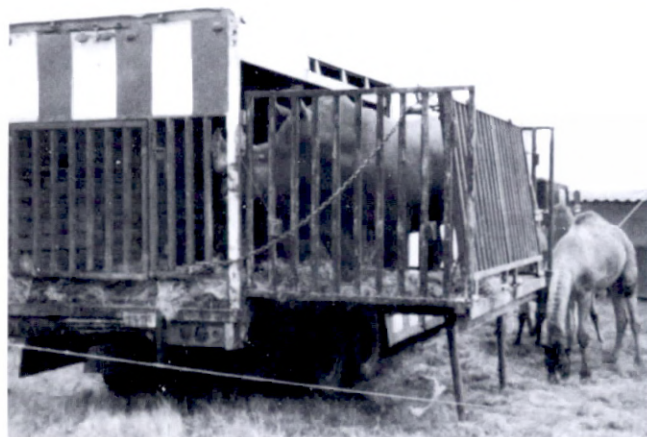
Late December brought a number of questions regarding the possible change in ownership of the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus. Rumors were flying fast and furious following the appearance of the ad in the *Wall Street Journal*.

Shortly after the ad appeared D. R. Miller, veteran showman and owner of the Carson & Barnes Circus visited the Deland, Fla. winter quarters and carefully examined the Beatty-Cole equipment. He was accompanied by his trusty lieutenant Ted Bowman. Following careful appraisal of the show an offer for purchase was made.

African white rhino in a cage in the Carson & Barnes menagerie, Dallas, Ga., Oct. 18, 1981. This is believed to be the only white rhino ever to be exhibited by a circus in the United States. In the past rhinos

have been either of the African black or Indian species. Note the unique cage arrangement to give the animal more space while the vehicle is parked in the menagerie. Joe Bradbury Photo.

D. R. Miller, owner of the Carson & Barnes show is pictured with his pride and joy, a young giraffe. Delaware, Ohio, Aug. 6, 1981.



Negotiations were conducted and for a while it appeared that the show would open in 1982 under Miller ownership, using the traditional Beatty-Cole management staff. The deal later fell through.

It was then that the old rumor from prior years of the show being given to a Florida university as a contribution by owner Jerry Collins caught fire again.

This turned out to be true, when on December 31, 1981, Mr. Collins did indeed donate the show, valued at \$2,000,000, to the Florida State University Foundation. John W. Pugh, long time BC manager, and a partner will buy the show over a 20 year period from the University.

John Pugh announced that the show will open under canvas early in April 1982, with few changes. The performance was booked prior to the closing of the 1981 season. He commented further that a 1982 arena tour was still being given serious consideration.

A newspaper wire release during the final date of the 1981 tour that the show was giving up showing under canvas turned out to have come from a comment taken out of context.

John W. Pugh came to this country with his father "Digger" Pugh in 1948 as a child on the Cole Bros. Circus. The senior Pugh had booked acts from England on the Cole and Mills shows in the 1940s. Pugh is 43 years of age and joined Beatty-Cole 21 years ago, moving up through the management ranks to the position of general manager.

Carson and Barnes Circus

Sporting the first Italian-made Canobbio tent in America, the huge Carson and Barnes Circus opened its season on March 14 in Paris, Tex. The show headed as far west as Phoenix, Az., turned east and north to Oklahoma and Kansas, and by June 1 was in Manhattan, Kansas. The circus turned around west into Colorado in June but by the 18th was in Kimball, Neb. on its way to Minnesota. Turning around in Minnesota and heading south for Mason City, the show was there on July 15. From there it headed south along the Mississippi River into Missouri, then east into Illinois and Indiana. Bedford was the Aug. 1 town. The route took the show into Ohio and northern Indiana, making only a few well chosen towns, and carefully avoiding too many towns that depended upon the depressed auto industry as its chief source of income. A few Michigan towns were played and by September 4 the circus was in Willard, Ohio, heading east for a three day stand in Pittsburgh, Pa., which was the first under canvas circus to play that city since the Ringling show folded there



The big top and midway of the Circus Vargas is shown in Rockford, Ill., in July of 1981. Pfening Photo.

in 1956. The dates were September 11 to 13, with an extra show added for the crowds. Immediately thereafter the circus played Cleveland, Ohio, until the 20th of September. From there, it headed south to the southwest corner of Virginia, playing Lynchburg on Oct. 6, then went south to Georgia for a few stands and then west, heading home in Hugo, Okla., and closing on Nov. 15. Carson and Barnes showed in 227 towns, playing 245 days out of 246, and gave 3 extra performances to satisfy the large crowds.

The circus carries a large display of animals, quite unusual for a contemporary show, but not unusual for this one. Rare animals carried are a young giraffe and John Davenport's white rhino. Also carried are 27 elephants, six camels, many llamas, three bears, a truck full of hay eating animals, innumerable horses and ponies (three liberty acts, one bareback horse and a pony drill and pony ride), a trailer of lions, tigers and a hyena for a cage act. All animals can be seen in an open air zoo, except for the cage act which are kept in the backyard.

Physically the circus is a true five ring circus, plus two additional areas where two of the three flying acts are permanently rigged. In total, the tent has eight aluminum push poles and seven middle pieces arranged thusly: a 40 foot, an 18 foot, a 40 foot, a 50 foot, a 40 foot, an 18 foot, and a 40 foot middle piece. There is one flying act permanently rigged in front of the grandstand and center ring, directly in the middle.

The performance was presented predominantly by Mexican families, with the Bautista and Gaona troupes (cousins of the triple somersaulting Tito of Ringling fame) supplying the bulk of the acts.

The midway has a variety of attractions, but the newest and most flashy is an untraditional side show entitled "It's Incredible," after the television show "That's Incredible." The performers are introduced as stunt men and women, not traditional sword

swallowers and the like. The entire unit is well flashed, clean, and very Hollywoodish, just as one would expect from the name. The show was framed in Florida and played most of the route, but on occasion was booked on major fair dates with big carnivals. The unit, managed by Harry Nelson, claimed to make a profit on a route that was supposed to be unprofitable.

Carson and Barnes also has an excellent circus band, led by William Reynolds. The nine pieces played traditional circus music and additional music in circus style. This is one of the two touring truly circus bands. (Beatty-Cole has the other.) Instrumentation is 3 trumpets, two trombones, baritone, bass, drums and organ. The music carries throughout the 376 foot tent with no enhancements, but only microphones placed on the stand.

The circus is said to have closed with a "profitable" season, but with the oncoming recessed economy at the end of 1981 as a factor, profitable is hard to define.

The entire fleet of trucks are diesel powered, and a canvas spool with two reel, a stakedriver and two forklift vehicles are carried.

Circus Vargas

Circus Vargas wintered in Arizona for about six weeks, opened in the winter quarters town of Casa Grande in early January under canvas and quickly went to the San Diego, Cal. area to begin trouping in earnest. The Vargas show covers the southern part of California very extensively, playing the three of four southern counties until nearly the end of May. Because the Vargas show doesn't publish its route after the southern California tour, fragments are available only from time to time or must be pieced together from observers after the fact. According to one source, the circus was in Sacramento, Calif. on June 1 and 2, and then the route vanished. Another source had the show heading north into Montana playing two day stands in shopping centers, ending in Billings on the 26th. The show reappeared July 7 to 9 in Springfield, Ill.,

playing until the 19th in that state. The show headed north and played a number of smaller sized towns in Wisconsin for two day stands until the 30th of July. Turning south into Iowa for a few stands brought the show back into Illinois and adjacent Missouri until its last date in Springfield on September 1 to 3. They disappeared again until October 12, when a date in Houston, Tex. appeared. They showed in the Texas-Louisiana area with a known date October 27-29 in Corpus Christi, Texas. The show moved westward to El Paso where it closed early on Nov. 18. The trip to the winterquarters area was made to Lion Country Safari Park, Laguna, Calif. On New Year's Day, 1982, the entire herd of 14 elephants appeared to pull a float on the Rose Parade in Pasadena. Leading the herd was a small African elephant.

As usual, Vargas rivals its other competitor for the lucrative southern California dates. The performance was enhanced by a Cuneo tiger act of five white tigers, four more than the closest rival, a multitude of elephants, a lot of horses (three liberty acts worth, but two have been sold to D. R. Miller's Carson and Barnes Circus), which, according to one source, all tethered out in the open on the midway, free for all to see.

Owner Cliff Vargas has pioneered the use of free tickets distributed by the stores in the malls and shopping centers where the show plays. This year one adult must accompany each three children to use the free ticket. The show advertises heavily on radio and especially television, and places a few window cards.

The performance has the traditional cat act worked by Wade Burck, elephants by Rex Williams, chimps by Cemon, and the three horse displays by Henri Wagneur, a European. There are dog and exotic animal acts to round out the animals displays. Aerial acts are provided by the Espanas with two flying acts and a cradle act. The Arman and Kniesley Duos have cradle acts to go along with the show-owned aerial ballet on webs. Ground acts are rola-bola by the Patricks, Ariz Bros. and Gonclaves; juggling by the Davidsons (Patrick's), Osmanis and the Ortany's; magic by Vince Carmen, tight wire by Victorio and Macaggis; and contortion by Ms. Redui and Carroll. Clowns include Dale Longmire and Billy McCabe, both long time pros in the business. According to *Amusement Business*, the strong show is long and strong, with a top notch performance.

During July an ad appeared in a trade publication asking for an aerialist/acrobatic team and coach. Later in the year, much circus equipment was offered for sale, including two big tops, transportation for both



Well known clown Billy McCabe is shown selling programs in front of the Circus Vargas marquee in 1981. Pfening Photo.

of them along with the poles, two liberty acts and a host of rolling stock. Prior to the ad, a gossip columnist printed a rumor that the show will buy a new Canobbio tent from Italy, and that would make the rolling stock and tents obsolete.

The circus moves on a variety of tractor trailers with a fairly large fleet of privately owned vehicles. Most of the tractors are diesel Kenworths, capable of hauling heavy loads at high speeds. With the usual northwest states of Washington and Oregon eliminated from the route, the only way to get the show into populated areas from California is to quickly play territory going through the Rockies and head east. The time period from June 1 in California to July 7 in Springfield, Ill. gives testimony that the show had to travel long

The midway and big top of Hoxie Bros. Circus on the Springfield, Ohio, lot Aug. 9, 1981. The side show on right was supposed to close following this date. Pfening Photo.



distances to cover the mileage between those two points in 37 days.

Hoxie Bros. Circus

This circus, one of two owned by L. B. "Hoxie" Tucker, opened its season April 6 in Key Biscayne, Fla. The show was managed by long time staffer, John Lewis, who assumed command for the first time. He was joined in the concession department by Jim Silverlake, former manager of Hoxie's smaller show, Great American Circus. Still using some phone dates set by former manager Joe McMahon, the show relies heavily upon that method of promotion in the southern areas, but less when arriving north of the Carolinas. Few phone dates were set for the northern tour, but used when individual promoters book the show for a series of dates. The show moves on 11 trucks, with only two not pulling semitrailers. The performance is presented in a two pole bale ring top with two rows of quarter poles, all aluminum, formerly owned by Beatty-Cole. The canvas is rolled on a two reel spool canvas truck. All bleacher seating is used, with all the lumber for the one ring presentation on one truck that also carries the poles and rigging. The midway has a sideshow, managed by Roger Boyd, Jr., which contains the animals and some working skill acts. Also on the midway is a privately owned snake show of Jim Silverlake and a pit show of a wooden carving of a humanoid type figure in a trailer. In reality, the trailer is used for concession storage while traveling, and the pit show is just a way to utilize an otherwise empty trailer as a money-making device.

The performance is given in one ring, with illusionist Gary Holvak as the announcer. A four piece band, headed by Charles Moyer, plays circusy music throughout the performance. Animal acts are provided by Mike and Randon Rice, who did four acts, but added a fifth near the end of the season. Randon first presented three chimps in display #5 and Mike works a baby elephant in display #9. In the second half of the show Mike presents a big horse, a miniature pony and a dog, while Randon presents her Russian Wolfhounds in #13. Mike

finished the performance by presenting the five Hoxie Bros. elephants as the final act, which is the extra one he acquired. Ground acts include the two acts of the Bruski family (bikes, sword balancing), the Bertloffs (adagio, single trapeze) doing two turns, Mrs. Roger Boyd, Jr., doing a hair hang, while Gary Holvak does a series of small illusions in the first half and the trunk escape (Metamorphosis) in the second half. There is one clown who performs between acts.

Animals carried by the show are the private stock of the Rices, which include a small elephant with tusks, three chimps, a horse and a pony along with seven dogs plus the six Hoxie owned elephants. Five of the younger ones are trained in a very fast and pleasing act (one of the younger bulls is a male African) while the sixth, a large Indian female, is used for work and riding. Also carried are a camel, two donkeys and a pony. All show-owned animals are exhibited in the side show tent, a brown 30 by 60 foot tent.

The show opened in Florida and quickly moved north, playing the first Georgia date April 18. By the 28th of May, it was entering New Jersey, and played a two day stand in Paterson the weekend of 29-30, and within one week cleared the state and went to New York, and then went west to pick up some major dates for the Shrine. Because of an agreement not to play Pennsylvania to any extent to keep the state fresh for the smaller show, the Hoxie show played only two days there, then doubled back into New York state, first to the east, then north, finally leaving the state at Ithaca. Taking a day off for travel, the show jumped to Maryland, picked up some dates and returned to Jersey for the 4th of July in Maplewood. Touring Jersey until the 14th, the show returned to New York state, and suffered a blowdown of the big top on July 19, in Saratoga Springs. After a few dates in New England starting with Bennington on July 20 and leaving on the 27th to enter Ticonderoga,

N.Y. on the 28th, the show moved rapidly across the state to pick up its first Ohio town at Geneva on Aug. 3. The show crisscrossed Ohio, Indiana, with a few dates in Michigan, and entered Illinois in September. It remained there until the 18th and headed south through Kentucky and Tennessee. Hoxie picked up some dates in Alabama, turned west into Louisiana at Slidell on Oct. 9. Playing towns not used by Beatty-Cole and Vargas, a swift turnaround resulted in more Mississippi dates and a run home to Miami where the show closed on Sunday, Nov. 8, at Deerfield Beach, Fla.

Great American Circus

The smaller show in the "Hoxie" Tucker family of circuses, the Great American Circus opened in early April in Florida, and entered Georgia on April 26th at Quitman. Quickly heading north to Pennsylvania to pick up a multitude of dates, new manager Alan Hill entered the state at Brookville June 8 for a route that contained about 80 days, though not consecutive. Hill became manager of this smaller show so he could more closely supervise his family's dates which comprised the bulk of the route for 1981. Travelling on only 8 trucks and trailers, this show had a seating capacity that would suffice for most of the towns played, about 1500 seats. The performance consisted of four groups of families: the Kohlreisers with the animals; the Ferreiras with balancing; the Gary Henry family with clowning and horses and the Oscar Macias family with balancing, juggling and cloud swing. Single acts were Mary Beaser as Miss Honey on the trapeze and Sammy Johnson on the Rola-bola.

The performance is given in three rings in a push pole top, an 80 foot round with two 30's and a 40 foot middle piece, having been used two previous seasons. Seating is on

The Great American Circus, owned by Howie Tucker, is shown in Newark, Ohio, in 1981. Ed Jones Photo.

wooden bleachers all around the top. All the tent, poles, rigging and canvas are carried on one trailer. Only a forklift and a stakedriver are used as labor saving devices, as one big elephant also works. Two are carried, but only one works. Other stock carried are four ponies and a camel. Music for the performance was done by an organ and drum, with Sammy Johnson as the announcer.

The midway contained a small side show that houses all the show's stock. Acts in the side show are Sammy Johnson swallowing swords and Mary Beaser as Miss Serpentina. Dayne Mull is the magician. Also on the midway are a Moon Walk, a snake show and the concession trailer.

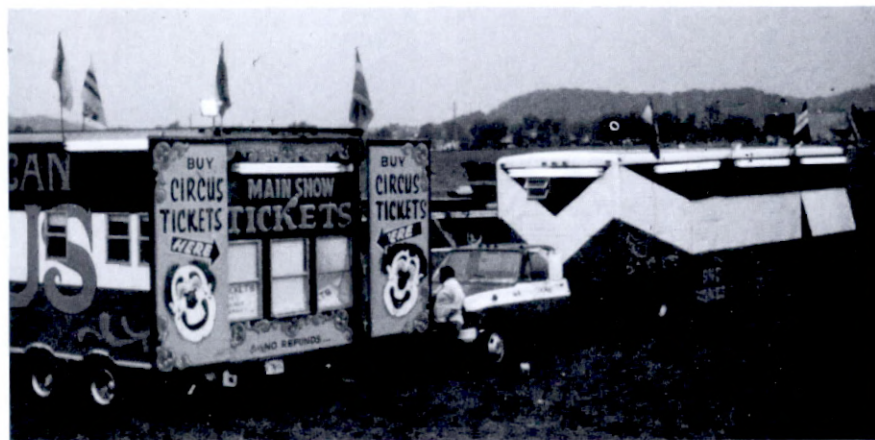
The circus left Pennsylvania the second week of July and entered New Jersey for a string of dates beginning with a week in North Jersey, a week in the southern part and then a week near the shore. The show returned briefly to Pennsylvania, headed south by Labor Day and closed Tuesday, September 29 at Claxton, Ga.

The circus tour was a joint booking venture of the Hill family of Harrisburg, Pa. Allan, his father Bill, and his brother Teddy have been the moving force on this show for the past three years. They have controlled the bulk of the show's route for that time, but have only been active in the management for this one year. An announcement was made at the beginning of December, 1981, that the arrangement will continue between Tucker and Allan Hill for 1982. However, no specific details have been made except that James Raab of Reading, Pa., will be the general agent and will supervise and direct the regional agents that are in the remaining territories. Plans for an early opening of Great American in the south are anticipated and a major tour of the northeast is expected.

Franzen Bros. Circus

Franzen Bros. Circus, owned by Wayne Franzen of Amherst Jct., Wis., is one of the smaller circuses organized in the nation. Despite being one of the smallest, it carried a strong but varied performance. The show moves on seven trucks, carried a yellow and blue big top, an 80 foot round with a 40 foot middle piece, has seating seven high on bleachers, carried a cat act and a great variety of animals. How it all fits is a miracle! Franzen, a former Industrial Arts teacher, then in his late 20's, learned how to break stock, and in 1974 framed his own show. In the ensuing eight years this small circus has gained an enviable reputation for its performance and the quality of its animal acts.

The performance is given by five performers, one clown and Franzen himself appearing four times as the



animal trainer. Music is provided by Lynn Michaels on the organ, who also doubles as the announcer. One problem that has been partially eliminated by Franzen is that of keeping help. On this show all performers have their share of work in erecting the tent or caring for the animals. As a result, help is always available to erect the top every morning and late matinees are never the order. The circus carries a spool truck, a fork lift and a stake driver for speedy erection of the tent. Since Franzen has so many mechanical skills, he can assemble and build much of his equipment and customize it for his own operation. As a result, the show is compactly framed and ingeniously rigged so that not a bit of space is wasted or extra lifting is in order. Even the stock truck is compactly loaded. The elephant is loaded over the fifth wheel, fifteen horses and one dromedary are loaded on the floor of the drop frame trailer while overhead are loaded the six goats, two donkeys and a few dogs in boxes. A peacock somehow fit into the trailer, too!

The midway is not elaborate. One small trailer, pulled by the props and music van in the big top, housed the ticket window, office and concession department. No other attractions are carried.

Canvas includes a small marquee that has one side opening to the concession trailer and the big top, which was new in the spring.

The show provided plenty of flash for the patrons. Since there are no competing attractions on the midway, early patrons can view all the stock penned in the backyard. Sections of fencing are carried by the show that are secured to the stock trailer on one end and a few stakes on the other to form a corral for the animals. Only the elephant was chained; the rest of the animals were put in separate sections of the corral to minimize human contact. Plenty of hay and water are available for their comfort. Tina Grieser was responsible for grooming and caring for the stock, so someone was almost always on watch while patrons were around.

Note should be taken of the kind and variety of animals presented by Wayne Franzen. Although a dog act was booked on this year, Franzen had enough animals to present six different animal acts. He presents four during the show. His first act is a cage act of four tigers in a pleasing 8 minute routine. Since the top is so small, the audience is virtually in the cage for the entire presentation, which adds to the thrill. In display #4 Franzen presents an exotic act of a camel and a llama. In the second half, Okha, the elephant does her act, with many pleasing tricks. The finale of the show is the twelve matched Appaloosa



The blue and white big top and midway of Franzen Bros. Circus is shown in Bowling Brook, Ill., May 31, 1981. Tim Tegge Photo.

liberty horses that take about 12 minutes to complete. Every major showy trick a liberty routine can do is done, completing the show with a wonderful finale. Franzen, dressed as Chief Red Feather, shows and trains the act to a superb conclusion. Franzen had tried to end the performance with the elephant act, but found the liberty drill had more impact, hence was the logical closing act.

Other acts trained by Franzen are a single horse act presented by Brian Grieser in display #9, just after intermission to open the second half of the performance, and a trained goat act with six animals, which did not work when the dog act was booked on the show.

The circus plays sponsored dates, with some fairs and celebrations. Most of the tour is sponsored dates, with window cards and some pictorials used. In addition to sponsors and their efforts to sell tickets, Franzen employs three engagement directors who precede the show and offer free puppet shows and ventriloquist acts in shopping centers and malls before show day. In the small towns played by this show, the impact tends to be greater than if it were a larger town. Ticket sales have been satisfactory despite the inclusion of Michigan towns hit by the declining economy, due in part to the auto industry's recession.

Robert Bros. Circus

Another of America's small circuses was Robert Bros., owned by Bob and Doris Earl. This show moves on approximately five trucks, and has a big top that is a 60 foot round with two 30's and a 40 foot middle pieces. Music is played by Leo Pinter on an organ. The performance is given in all three rings, with a wide variety of acts.

The midway consists of a Moon Walk, an elephant skin dog as a pit show, a pony ride and a concession stand. The big top is blue and white striped canvas. Seating is by

bleachers, the rings on the front side. The performance was in 12 displays which included one elephant, a horse, three performing ponies and numerous dogs. The bulk of the performance is done by two families, the Stephens and the Mariettas. Single acts are Barbara Dudgeon, Joe Meyers as Jomar the Clown, Kalamar the Illusionist, along with Bob Earl's brother Jeff working dogs and the elephant.

The Earls are from Sarasota, Fla., and purposely keep the show small so they can effectively manage it. The route usually begins in the Carolinas in the Spring, playing many of the smaller towns that are crossroads or isolated from the main travel arteries. One of the favorite states for the show was Pennsylvania, with its numerous small towns and backwood mountain towns. The area west of Harrisburg has been known to support the show favorably. Also, many towns in the

John "Gopher" Davenport manager of Ford Bros. Circus, Ottawa, Kan. 1981. Davenport, son of Ben Davenport of Dailey Bros. fame, is American's youngest circus owner. Jim McRoberts Photo.





Ford Bros. Circus on the lot in Ottawa, Kan., 1981. The white big top had blue and white sidewall. Jim McRoberts Photo.

coal regions in the eastern part of the state have been played. The show has played New York state extensively, alternating with Pennsylvania. The route is booked by regional agents who are able to do a few consecutive dates, but primarily the route is set by Bob Earl himself. He frequently appears in an area and books a few towns, then makes a fairly long jump to another area and books in that vicinity. By doing that, new areas are tried and information about local economic conditions are assessed. This reduces mileage and eliminates dependency upon a one industry or business area.

Ford Brothers Circus

This circus is one that changes its title fairly regularly. The show is owned by John "Gopher" Davenport, who in past years had it titled Jungle Wonders Circus. The trucks are painted but not lettered or numbered. Most of the time no big top is used, but one is carried. According to one source from Nebraska, poles and rigging were erected, the sidewall hung, but no tent was erected. According to another report, the tent blew down in San Leon, Texas, and apparently destroyed the top. This incident reportedly was in May. Later in July, a denial was made concerning the blowdown.



Big John Strong Circus

The Big John Strong Circus uses a small big top, but that is where the smallness ends. For the show that says it has more friends than Santa

Big John Strong is shown making a side show opening on his circus early in 1981. Marv Krieger Photo.

Claus, this is no idle boast. The circus was the convention circus for the annual CFA at Scottsdale, Az. in June. The show did prove its boast is true. The circus set up on the green lawn of the convention hotel and proceeded to give six performances over three days right under the noses of all the fans.

When described later in the season, the show was still attracting good houses that duplicated those at the convention.

The performance is given in a 60 foot round with a 30 foot middle piece. A rather strong performance was noted for the show even after the convention in June. In a 13 display performance, the acts listed included five clowns, Bobby Gibbs with the camel and llama, a pony and the single elephant; Chris Alberti with dogs; the Weller family of acrobats; and Flippo and Chryssi doing juggling. The show moves on five trucks and trailers and plays for a variety of sponsors.

The circus, which winters in California, headed east to Scottsdale for the convention, and later was reviewed in Iowa, thus making a fairly long continental tour.

The Big Apple Circus

The Big Apple Circus was started in New York City six years ago by Paul Binder, as an outgrowth of an acrobatic school. The show generally limited its appearances to the Manhattan area.

The show achieved its greatest success with a grand presentation during a stand from December 4, 1981 to January 3, 1982, under a new tent located at Lincoln Center, next to the Metropolitan Opera House.

The Big Apple Circus jumped into the big time for this late 1981 stand using a new 1,550 seat blue plastic tent from Europe, heated by forced air.

Top acts from around the world were booked, including the Flying Gaonas, Katja Schumann, Philippe Petit, and Michael Moschen.

On December 8 Mayor of New York, Edward I. Koch, served as honorary ringmaster at a \$75 a ticket benefit for the New York School of the Arts, sponsor of the show. This highpoint was followed by a serious blow when a fire broke out at 5:15 a.m. on December 10.

The horse "Dabo" on loan from the Swiss Circus Knie, which had been ridden in the show by Katja Schumann, was killed in the fire and a pony had to be destroyed after being badly burned. The show quickly borrowed a horse from John Herriott, who had just closed with the Beatty-Cole show. Ms. Schumann was back in the performance riding the Herriott horse on December 13.

The well known international circus stars were added to many of the acts



The European big top used by the Big Apple Circus was dark blue with blue and red sidewall. The tent is 111 ft x 124 ft. and is 38 ft. high. The Italian made tent has a

total capacity of 1,700, but seating at the Lincoln Center date was 1,550. This photo was taken in Baltimore, Md. Photo from Big Apple Circus.

held over from the summer tour. The show appearance looked as though it had been brought from Europe, using a one ring format with a backdoor curtain under a bandstand. The 110 ft. x 140 ft. top was erected on Damrosch Park, a site that is all terazzo, marble and concrete. The key stakes were placed in tree pits, with some lines anchored to large 4 x 4 foot cement blocks. The show was well lighted using 50 fixed and three follow spot lights. The seating consisted of blue padded chairs.

The show was well advertised with posters in subways and ads in the daily papers. A beautiful printed program was published for the date.

Circus Tivoli

North of the border, news was being made by CHS member J. Sergei Sawchyn as he developed and opened with a new European style circus entitled Circus Tivoli. The show opened in Toronto on April 15 with most of the equipment purchased new and sent from Europe or built in Canada. All arrived safely for rehearsals and the show opened to good reviews. The Italian Canobbio top is for a one ring

The Tivoli light plant was carried in this semi-trailer. The movable fencing that surrounded the lot was painted yellow, as were the trucks. Bob MacDougall Photo.



The European big top of Circus Tivoli made a big splash during its short Canadian tour in 1981. Bob MacDougall Photo.

presentation with four latticed center poles, and is blue with red and yellow trim with stars at the pole points and along the ridge lines. The lavatory trailer was made in England along the lines of airline lavatories, and a walk through marquee was built in Milan, Italy. All the rest of the equipment was designed and built under the supervision of Sawchyn. The tent is big enough to hold a flying act. Seating capacity of 2,726 is accomplished by having metal stringers and wooden bleachers around most of top. The seats have footrests. Prices for the seats were pegged at \$9.50 each for each of 150 box seats, and the

remaining were scaled at \$8.50 down to \$4.50 each.

The program was composed of European acts from Denmark, France, Portugal and Austria. South American and North American acts were also employed.

The route published of Circus Tivoli included Ottawa, Montreal, Quebec, London and many other major cities in the southern part of Canada. No U.S. visit was contemplated. The circus was funded in part by the Canada Council, a Canadian government agency designed to provide seed money to privately sponsored shows with the prospect of earning a profit. The Council bought 1%, or \$25,000 of the shares of stock offered for sale. Judging by pictures in the program, the equipment is in fine shape and the show was well designed. However, by

early July an article in *Circus Report* dated June 28 circulated that the show had folded due to poor business. According to advance publicity, the route was to be sold by marketing and promotion, not by telephones or any other devices. No names were given about the people responsible for the advance or for marketing and promotion.

Martin and Downs Circus

Meanwhile CMB member Al Stencell of Campbellford, Ontario, has his own circus, Martin and Downs, touring mostly in the province of Ontario during the first part of the

The Circus Tivoli blue big top had red sidewall. The stairs to seats are typical of European shows. Bob MacDougall Photo.



season, and in the Maritimes during July, August and part of September. Provinces visited were New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and six towns on Prince Edward Island. The show opened Friday May 15 at Port Hope, Ont., and closed on Monday September 7 at Edmunston, N.B.

The performance is given in 15 displays, under a three pole big top, housing a ring and a stage. The announcer is Billy Martin who works in the side show and the big show as well as being the announcer. Music is done by Dave Miller and his electric organ.

Acts included two elephants, the Lang family doing three acts, Miguel Meraz from Mexico and Stencell himself doing the horses and dogs, each in a separate display.

The show carried two tents, a side show and a big top. The big top is a 70 foot round end with two 30 foot middle pieces, seating about 1200 people. An extensive midway was also carried. The owner, Stencell, was quoted in an interview to be contemplating bringing the show to the U.S.A. but a lot of paperwork would be a deterrent.

Other historical notes about the outdoor or tented circus.

One outdoor tented show that failed was the Stebbing Royal European Circus from Sarasota. The owners failed to make payments on certain loans and were defaulted. On July 28 an auction was held to sell off the remaining equipment of the show. Animals included four performing elephants: Opal, 30; Louie, 14; Kay, 12; and Mike, 7 years old, and one Royal Bengal tiger. Other miscellaneous items as ring curbs, an inflatable bounce ride and ring carpet were sold. No indications were made as to the new owner. The Stebbings were thought to have been in Venezuela at the time of the sale.

One last move for the old 1938 Hagenback-Wallace Circus was achieved when Circus World of Florida purchased the last remaining wagons, #88, a chair wagon and #54, a cookhouse water wagon from Jerry Booker of California. They will be restored and exhibited in the museum being developed by Chappie Fox.

Indoor Circuses

Indoor circuses continue to be a major factor in the amusement industry as more and more towns have their own indoor facilities and the cost of producing an indoor show may be considerably less than an undercanvass circus. However, the softening economy has taken its toll of grosses for the indoor shows. The best indications have been in reports of the Mattel Co., owners of the Ringling show. Quarterly reports have shown a decrease in revenue due to decreased attendance at the circus. Specific numbers of decrease were noted, but



The big new 1981 spec of the Ringling-Barnum Circus Red unit was "Before the Parade Passes." This band chariot was built for the spec. The photo was taken during the first stand on the road in St. Petersburg, Fla., Jan, 1981. Ed Jones Photo.

at least a 9% decline in revenues was noted. Government economists predict that the economy will recover by the second half of 1982.

Ringling-Barnum Red

The red unit again featured the exploits of animal trainer Gunther Gebel-Williams, presenting his many feats. Williams performs in six acts which specifically name him, as well as in the 4 specs and also helping with the horse acts of his wife and daughter and the leopard act worked by Henry Schorer. Indeed, the Felds have captured a superstar of the circus world! Although the show is dominated by Williams, many other fine and outstanding artists appear. Perhaps first recognition should go to the flying act of the Vazquez family of Mexico. Their 16 year old son, Miguel, was the first person alleged to have completed a quadruple somersault on the flying trapeze in Long Beach, California, at 11:45 PM on Aug. 19, 1981. Miguel is 5 feet, eight inches tall and weighs 122 pounds. Although other records noted that Ernest Clarke and Tito Gaona have done the trick, this was the first time the feat had been recorded on film or video tape. His catcher was brother Juan. About 30 people witnessed the event.

Other aerial acts on this unit include Sarasota's own Dolly Jacobs, daughter of clown Lou Jacobs, doing a solo Roman ring act; Marquerite Michele with a hair hang is the featured first half spec; the flying act of the Farfans; the high wire duo of

the Carillo Brothers; the cloud swing of La Tosca; and the two hanging trapeze acts of the Vazquez family, Juan and Felipe, both from the flying act.

Animal trainers besides Williams include Wally Naghtin with two sets of bears working in rings 1 & 3, while Mickey Antalek is featured in the center ring. Dog acts are worked by Anna Farfan, Mickey Antalek and Eric Braun. Braun also works a solo comedy dog act flanked by two clowns doing comedy animal acts.

Ground acts include two teeterboard acts from Poland in rings 1 & 3, while the center spot is occupied by a large Bulgarian troupe. All troupes returned to their respective homelands, with the Polish troupes most reluctant because of the worsening political situation of martial law declared in Poland on Dec. 13.

Thrill acts are consecutively done on this year's program. The thrilling Carillo Brothers are followed by the Urias troupe with their Globe of Death. The globe is an iron mesh cage about twenty feet in diameter where two performers ride around inside it, and then a female stands in the center while the riders come close to her.

One feature of the performance is the exhibition of a male giraffe named Dickie led on a halter around the track during the closing spec of the first half. The animal is casually led around by Williams and one of his assistants. From past reports, the giraffe was very skitterish, but after two years of conditioning, the animal quieted down considerably. Those circus buffs in the know realized the giraffe was being trained on the road, and made a point to see the animal and check on its progress during the year. They were pleasantly surprised to see this remarkable feat done on an American circus. Reports of this type of animal training are known in



This new poster design was used on a handbill advertising the Ringling-Barnum Red show stand in Philadelphia, Pa.

Europe, such as a trained giraffe on Mary Chipperfield's Circus in England in 1972.

Another feat of the first magnitude is the clown alley of the red unit. The 25 or so clowns worked a "meet and greet" for about 20 minutes before show time, performed in 6 clown numbers, worked in the 4 specs, rode elephants and assisted in the leaps. Nowhere will you find harder working clowns than on the Ringling show. Chuck Sidlow is the clown in charge of the alley. Of note in the clown department is the record holding for stilt walking held by John Russel who walked 32 feet in 26 steps on national television to break his previous world's record. The feat took place on Jan. 12, 1981 at St. Petersburg, Fla.

Since the Ringling circus takes turns alternating its units on the route, the red unit was the "new" unit, it therefore played the traditional stand in New York's Madison Square Garden during the Easter holiday in the spring. Because finding a suitable place to park the train in Manhattan proved fruitless, the show train was parked about 8 miles away near Shea Stadium. Since a crowded and unreliable expressway was the only road into the Garden, a new method for transportation had to be devised. The solution was to have a set of special cars attached to certain trains of the Long Island Railroad (Conrail) that departed and arrived at the Garden and stopped especially at the station where the train was parked.

Although initially inconvenient, the system worked satisfactorily. However, the public was denied the annual animal walk from the train to the building. This year it took place at 3:30 AM to avoid traffic and the route was through the Queens Midtown Tunnel, certainly not the most conspicuous time or place for publicity. However, according to sources in New York, the treat will be reinstituted for the 1982 blue show's walk.

The red unit left its Philadelphia stand on June 14 and headed west to Louisville, Ky., opening June 17. The show's itinerary got as far as Phoenix, Az. where the stand was cancelled because the roof of the Coliseum developed a crack, forcing the building to be closed until repairs were finished. The cancellation was about one week prior to the arrival, causing the refund of about 2,500 tickets. What especially hurt was the fact that the circus had deducted a day from the next stand, Tucson, to add an extra day in Phoenix. Ticket holders were offered the opportunity for refunds or exchange for the Tucson date.

From Tucson the show went to San Diego, the first of the west coast towns. The show turned northward through California, Washington, and Oregon, leaving that state for a trip over the mountains to Salt Lake City, opening there September 30. Then the long jumps continued bringing the show into the Chicago area at Rosemont Oct. 15, and the Amphitheatre until Nov. 15. The next big jump was back into the New York area to open at the new Meadowlands Arena, within sight of the skyline of Manhattan, only 4 miles away from Madison Square Garden where it had played back in May. From Jersey a quick one day move took the show to Long Island's Nassau Coliseum for its closing stand, ending Sunday Dec. 13. The trip to Venice, Fla., was accomplished with little incident. According to one source, business had been satisfactory, and the show was com-

The elephant tent and wagon of Ringling-Barnum Circus Blue is shown in Dayton, Ohio, June 1981. Pfening Photo.

ing home a winner. One factor that might have contributed was the lack of opposition from Circus Vargas in the Pacific northwest states, starting with Portland, Ore.

Ringling-Barnum Blue

The second unit, Ringling/Blue, sporting an almost new performance, opened in late January in Miami Beach, Fla., and moved slowly north on a route that played the major cities with buildings big enough for the show. They came up through the south to Washington, D.C., for the Easter holiday, April 19. Then a quick trip to New England followed, with Providence, R.I. as the last stand in May. Next came a westward swing through New York state, Ohio and south again to Huntsville, Ala., on June 24. Apparently the date of Louisville, Ky., cancelled, and Huntsville was substituted. The tour continued in the south through Mississippi, Louisiana and closing in Houston, Tex., on Aug. 2. A northward movement put the show in Toledo, Ohio, opening Oct. 2, and Detroit, Mich., closing Oct. 11. Then came a two day move all the way back to Boston, Mass., closing there on Oct. 26, followed by a reverse move back into Cleveland, Ohio for a closing on Nov. 8, thence to Pittsburgh, where it closed for the season on Nov. 15. From the routing, the show made a lot of moves to play territory that would be favorable only during certain parts of the year. The Pittsburgh date was restored to the route because the Pittsburgh Civic Center changed hands, and the new management allowed a different concession arrangement, one more favorable to the circus.

The year was not without its share of problems and difficulties. Since superstition says that things will happen in threes, the blue unit had its full complement of mishaps. The first difficulty was in routing. A substitute date was Huntsville while other towns were allegedly substituted for ones previously contracted early in the season.

The second mishap was the wreck of two sleeping cars, #77 and #79, in a ten car derailment at Gibson City,



Ill., while enroute from Indianapolis to Des Moines, on September 28. Fortunately no injuries were reported. The wreck occurred on the N & W road in a town of about 3600 people, just north of Decatur, Ill. Ten cars of the train were down on the roadbed, and much track was torn up. No cause was known for the derailment. Charlie Smith, the trainmaster of the red unit immediately flew to the scene of the derailment. He worked for a week in the N & W shops with 20 railroad men helping him. He had to replace 15 sets of wheels for the damaged cars. Within a week of the accident, the cars were returned to the show's stand in Toledo, Ohio.

The third accident happened to feature thrill performer Johnny Zoppe, who fell 45 feet from his trapeze on a rocket type rigging. According to reports, Zoppe fell on Tuesday, September 29 during the opening performance, while hanging solo from the bar. His fall was attributed to having rigging of the two outer rings too close to the center ring where he performs. Due to centrifugal force of the rotating rocket, he swung in a wider radius than the guy lines would allow, hence catching his foot on a rope ladder which was too close. He was ripped from the bar and fell. One reason given for the incorrect placement of the rope rigging was that the show was late from the derailment, and that there was not time to drill new holes for tiedown plates. Zoppe was scheduled to return to the show when he recuperates, but will not return for the 1982 edition of the blue unit.

The performance of the blue unit was revamped for the 1981 season. Some acts that formerly were on the overseas Monte Carlo unit playing the Far East returned, notably Charly Baumann's tigers, daredevil Elvin Bale with his aerial gyro wheel and his cannon act and the Silagi teeterboard act.

Animal acts included three rings of bareback and Cossack riding, Baumann's tigers, Ursula Bottcher's polar bears and the Gautier family with the elephants. Aerial acts included two flying acts of the Segreras and the Padillas, the perch acts of the

Krisztov and the Grzelak, the aerial cradle of the Grantcharovi, the thrill act of Betty and Johnny Zoppe, Bale's two acts as mentioned and the high wire act of the Guerreros. The ground acts included the unicycles of the King Charles Troupe, three perch acts of the Polonia, the Dobritch's and the Georgiev troupe, and the three teeterboard acts of the Oblocki, the Silagi and the Kehaiovi. The performance has four production numbers: opening; first half closing; elephants with the Gautiers and the closing finale.

Physically, the show is still in the 40 car class. This is the second season for this unit, so it goes to the smaller buildings or the smaller towns than the "new" show. The circus has its own promoters for the various towns, using tie-ins with the local merchants, such as fast food chains. A local advertising agency with all the connections for the media provide most of the basis for the advance sales. One device used in all the cities is the animal walk from the train to the building so that all the local newspaper reporters and electronic media will have an opportunity to ride an elephant and describe their adventures to their audience. All this makes for good copy and visualization, and free advertisement.

Personnel changes on this unit reflect the return of the overseas unit. Baumann returned as performance director with Peggy Williams as his assistant. This is the first time for this job for the former clown. Lawrence Kelly replaced Harold Ronk as singing ringmaster.

According to the stockholders report of Mattel, Inc., owners of the Ringling Circus which is a part of the company's Entertainment segment, circus profits as of Oct. 31, 1981 were lower due to increased costs, but attendance was increasing slightly. Softness of the revenues was attributed to the recession now being found in the nation. The absence of

The great circus parade came to Chicago for the first time in May 1981. The Swan bandwagon from the Circus World Museum is shown on Michigan Ave. Pfening Photo.



Charly Baumann, performance director, left, and Bob MacDougall, general manager of the Ringling-Barnum Blue unit outside the Hara Arena, Dayton, Ohio. Pfening Photo.

the overseas Monte Carlo unit's revenues was also noted.

Hubert Castle Circus

The Hubert Castle/Zerbini Circus with Jon "Tarzan" Zerbini as owner, used two units for some dates. According to one source, the Castle show made two routes in the Pacific northwest, the Gold unit, managed by Bob Dunham, in March and the other in July.

When the Gold unit appeared in Seattle for the Nile Temple Shrine, the performance consisted of a caged cat act of Gary Thomas, the Olmedas who did juggling, bicycles and dressage horse, the Pietro Canestrelli Teeterboard act, the Horvath Chimps, the Rodriquez family with a triple hair hang and rolling globes, the Les Bloc high wire act, the Marie France dog act and the Braun Reinhold cradle and human cannonball acts. The announcer was Jon Friday. This set of acts seemed to be a second unit as there was only a little bit of advertising and as a result few crowds at the shows noted. Although the performance, presented in three rings lasted 2½ hours, no program was available to list all the acts or their order.

The other unit had a date in Indianapolis, Ind. for April 23-26, which was also for a Shrine. There the band was led by Greg Tosca with Col. Lucky Larabee announcing, presented this show, consisting of a Slide for Life to open the show, two motorcycle high wire acts, the Cristiani uncaged leopards and trampoline, three cradle acts of the Brauns, Pinsons and Paulsons, a comedy car by Jorge Rossel, three dog acts of the Wilson,

Pinson and Adams families, the Smaha and Pinson horse acts, a gaucho rope twirling act, two low wire acts, Tarzan Zerbini's cage act, balancing and acrobatics by the Acadis and Les Michels, 2 elephant acts, a sway-pole act and the finale. Since the circus operates 2 units, multiple bookings were possible. This performance was particularly strong for the date.

The Castle show played a lot of multiple day stands, but some one day stands were the order in sparsely settled areas. They had simultaneous dates in some areas, thereby necessitating a second unit. There were some major Shrine dates in the midwest that were serviced by a strong unit of acts. Apparently there was a juggling of acts as Sioux Falls, S.D. and Indianapolis, Ind. were booked for the same week.



The American Continental Circus/Canadian International Circus

This circus unit, produced by the Gatti family had a route in Canada and the U.S. The title was changed to fit the circumstances. The show opened in Snyder, Texas in March and headed for the west coast. It reached Regina, Sask. on Aug. 14 and played in Canada for about 3 weeks, returning to the States in Washington at Yakima. The season was to close in Texas in mid-October, playing about 150 dates for various sponsors. Telephone promotions were used in most dates. About 35 performers are carried with about 35 vehicles in the fleet, most privately owned.

Acts for the Canadian tour, which was reviewed, included the following: Kay Rosaire's wild animals, Johnny Peer's comedy dog act, Tommy Donaho and Pom Pom Scott with elephants, Joe Lemke's chimps and Vasquez's chimps and dogs and the Suarez family's riding act. The aerial acts included the Rosamonds cradle act, Les Rogers revolving ladder, the Maridon Duo's high wire act, Sally Ashton on single trapeze along with 9 web girls and the Luna's flying act. Ground acts were the Ashton's musical comedy, the Dancing Gauchos from Argentina, the Rigques Duo of spinning tops, the Ramon duo on rola-bola, the Perredons perch act,

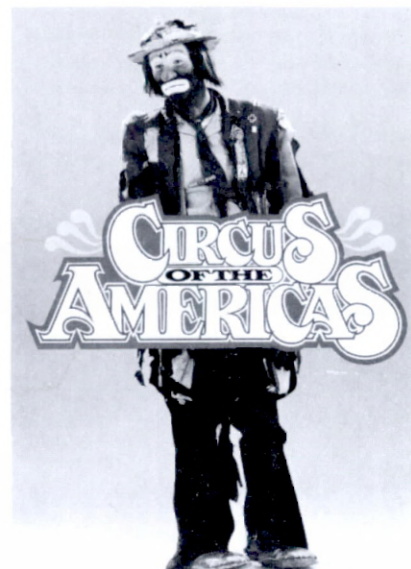
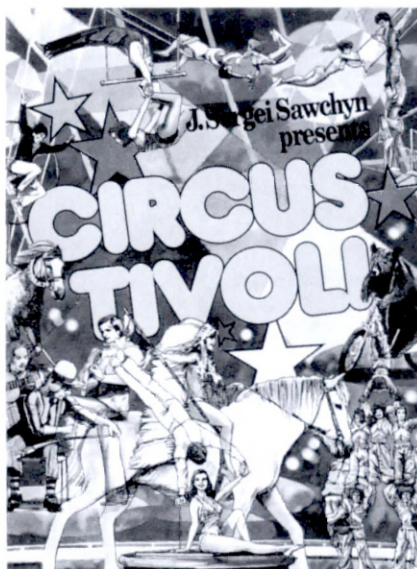
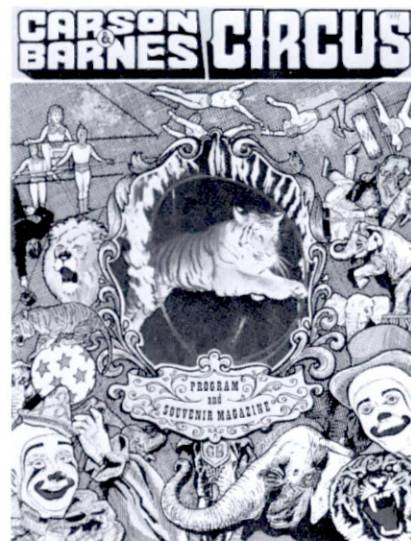
Mr. Fred & Co., with contortion comedy and the Tangiers Troupe of Moroccan tumbling. A 3 piece band along with singing ringmaster John A. Miller were carried. Clowns on the show were Johnny Peers, Doug Ashton, Tom Piccard, Weary Willie and Dan Mason, with Debbie the Clown on advance work.

Royal Hanneford Circus

One of the smaller indoor shows was the Royal Hanneford Circus produced by Tommy and Struppi Hanneford. The circus plays as a unit in small buildings, tents and in front of grandstands, wherever they can fit. The show was in White Plains, NY at the County Center on the Washington's Birthday weekend, and presented a well rounded performance despite the small building.

Four production numbers were the

1981 Programs



basis for the show which used the Hanneford family acts as the primary acts. They contribute a cage act, two bareback acts, elephants and all the necessary ring curbs, carpets, lighting and music needed for any size show. The singing ringmaster was Al Leonard and the announcer was Senor Rai. The performance opens and closes with production numbers, and all are in good taste.

Animal acts are the tigers worked by Bill Golden, Mark Karoly presenting elephants, dressage and featured in the bareback riding act, as well as the comedy riding act, Gerard Soules' poodles, and a gorilla parody. Aerial acts were done by the Lisner duo, doing single traps and a hanging perch act, and the Arturo Gaona family doing a flying act and ground teeterboard. Ground acts were the mentioned teeterboard, Sladek's chair balancing, Senor Rai's illusions and Gerard Soules' plate spinning.

Music was provided by the Kay Parker duo of organ and drums, augmented by local musicians where necessary.

Bookings were done in the east by John McConnell, who has produced a book about the Hannefords and a promotional movie for prospective sponsors. The show had been booked into Wildwood, NJ at the municipal auditorium as an attraction for tourists at the Jersey shore. In contrast to that small building, Tommy Hanneford has also provided the Detroit Shrine Circus of five rings.

Coronas Circus of Hollywood

Coronas Circus is another circus production company with a large supply of acts that may be presented in a variety of buildings. They have a big show available such as in the Monroe, La., Shrine contract, or a very small segment such as presented at the Danbury, Conn. Fair. Whatever the size, there was much care in presenting a showy, flashy performance with as much showmanship as possibly could be utilized.

Acts carried were presented by a large variety of people, all family or closely related. These "house" acts included a cloud swing, single traps and human cannonball by Warren A. Bacon, the thrill acts of a single female trapeze, the aerial gyro wheel, motorcycle on an inclined high wire, sway pole and a revolving aerial rocketship, all by various Coronas such as George, Serge or Stevie, George's wife. Booked acts used frequently for a variety of spring dates were Horton's Bears, Anderson's White Horse Troupe and Dubsky's uncaged leopards. Ground acts were Satani Demon's fire act, Ron Perry's wire act and Wizbini's wire act. Clowns used were CoCo, CoCo III and Pizza.



The T & T Royal Olympic Circus is shown on the parking lot of the Great Western Shopping Center in Columbus, Ohio, June 1981. Earl Tegge, producer is visiting with fans on the left. Pfening Photo.

Equipment owned by the Coronas were 3 semis, 1 car carrier, 2 straight bed units with trailers and 12 personal units for the acts. Additional acts were booked on as necessary.

Hamid-Morton Circus

The Hamid-Morton Circus managed by George and Jimmy Hamid, a father-son combination, was one of the oldest indoor circuses in continuous operation in America. Founded by the late George Hamid, owner of Atlantic City's Steel Pier and the New Jersey State Fair, this show has endured through thick and thin. Currently under the active guidance of Jimmy Hamid, the show has developed a strong route of Shrine dates in the spring. The show opened in late February and had worked up until the end of May. The current listing of route and performers was not available, but the cage act was an act of the Chipperfield Circus of

England, trained by Dickie himself, but not presented by him here in the States. The performance usually was strong enough for a two hour presentation with an intermission. The circus carried all its own lighting, ring curbs and carpets, but all the acts were booked for the tour. The show owns no animals but has trailers to transport the show properties.

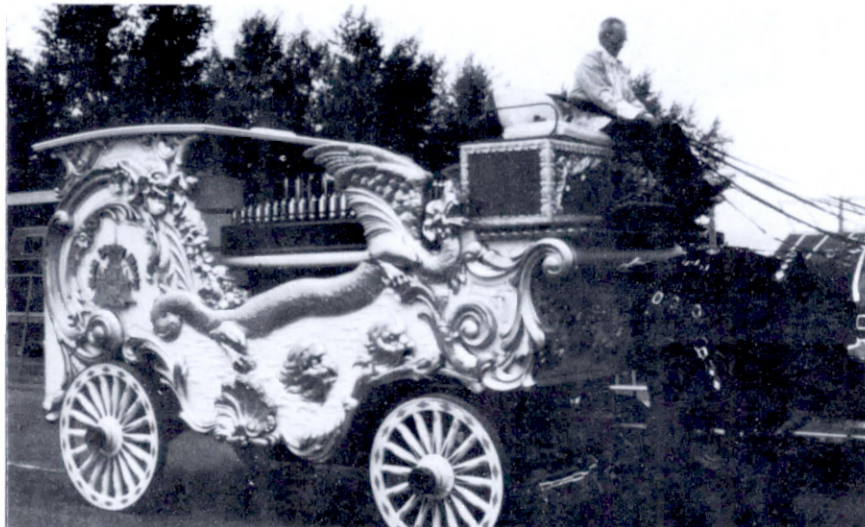
TNT & Royal Olympic Circus

Another small circus that tours indoors in malls and in shopping centers is this little show, owned and managed by the Tegge family. The show plays from west coast to the midwest, carrying one ring and a bandstand with an organ and drum furnishing the music. Acts that appeared on the show this season were the O'Brien family with slack wire, unicycle and juggling, the two Houcks with their juggling and son Tim Tegge doing magic. The length of the performance depended upon the sponsor's wishes, but 30 to 45 minutes was the average length of time preferred. The performers could do more than the described acts if necessary.

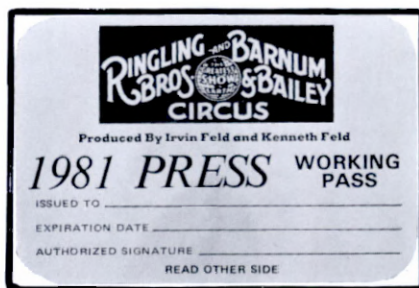
Winn's Europama

John Winn had put together a thrill show using many circus acts. He had booked the show into a number of towns in the Pacific northwest but never published a route. On occasion the dates would surface.

This carved calliope wagon from Walt Disney World made a number of appearances at fairs in 1981. Although it carried a dummy boiler, compressed air was used, not steam. Gordon Brown Photo.



Obituaries of people known in the outdoor show business in 1981: Henry Brunk (79) of Brunk's Comedians, Paul Balodys (74) a former aerialist, Charles (Sealo, the Seal Boy) a side show attraction, Bradley Garland (48) all round circus man, Ray Scheetz (82) executive, Sparks Circus, Joseph L. Antalek (73) Perch pole performer, Raymond Behee (74) Flying act fame, Don A. Koehler (55) world's tallest man, W.J. Thorn (76) former elephant man of Kelly-Miller, Lawrence (Larry) White (70) Elephant boss on RBBB in '30's, Eleanor Hodges (99) known professionally as Hodgini, of riding act, F.A. "Babe" Boudinot (85) former RBBB general agent until 1955, Al Ross (73) clown, Richard Barstow (73) head choreographer for RBBB for 29 years, Walter Beford Herod (77) high wire artist, Valdez, juggler at Circus Circus, Las Vegas, Nev., William Bushbaum, horse trainer, Raul R. Suarez (53) of current bareback riding act, Kenneth Van Every (73) supplied wooden stakes and poles to shows, George "Slim" Lewis, elephant



authority and author, Mel Miller (54) Clown, press agent, museum curator, D. H. (Sailor Doc) Riggs tattooed man, Howard A. Furlong (65) carpenter-Beatty-Cole Circus enroute, James A. Haley (82) former president of RBBB 1946-48, politician, Hazel L. King (91) Gainesville circus horse and dog trainer, Edward Peebles (60) balloon sculpture artist, Leona Carver (95) noted for diving horses on Steel Pier in Atlantic City, Count Popo DeBathe (80) internationally known clown, Bill DeArmo (94) juggler, Leo Entwistel (60) elephant handler, Hoxie Circus,

enroute, Milt Robbins (86) side show operator, Jack Leontini (81) Producer of Tom Packs and Wallenda circuses, Edmundo Zacchini (81) creator of human cannonball act, Bobby May (74) juggler, Jean P. (Miss Jeannie) Carson (89) wardrobe mistress, RBBB, 1916-74, Pauline B. Loretta (83) aerial horizontal bar performer and Howard Suesz, show owner, Hagen Bros. and Clyde Bros. Circuses.

Conclusion

For this first time endeavor, I would like to thank my wife and son for their patience while I worked on this article. I especially want to thank Mike Sporrer of Bellevue, Wash., for his contributions. His abundance of material added immensely to the finished product. Most of the information was culled from the pages of *Circus Report*, published by Don Marcks of El Cerrito, Calif. Contributions by Joe Bradbury, Joe Fleming and Tom Parkinson are appreciated. *Amusement Business* was the source of the Vargas and Gatti produced circuses.

BILL KASISKA'S LETTERHEADS



WINTER QUARTERS - CHESTER, PA.

The Hargreaves Big Rail Road Shows toured from 1900 to 1907. It was at its zenith in 1904 when the show moved on 20 cars, and used two rings and one stage. Robert Stickney, Jr. was equestrian director and Al G. Barnes presented his animal acts in the big show.

This letterhead used in 1907 is printed in dark blue and gold.

THE FRED BUCHANAN RAILROAD CIRCUSES 1923-31

Robbins Bros. Circus

Part V - The 1927 Season

by Joseph T. Bradbury

The first report on Fred Buchanan's Robbins Bros. Circus for 1927 came in the Feb. 5, 1927 *Billboard* which said that the show in winterquarters at Granger, Iowa was getting ready for the coming season. Owner Fred Buchanan and superintendent Earl Sinnott were already on the job in that respect. Traffic manager, Ed L. Brannan, who had been ill, had fully recovered, as had contracting agent, Dan Hoffman, who suffered a fractured leg in an auto accident last November. It was reported that Mr. and Mrs. Manny Gunn will again be with the show. Mrs. Gunn will ride menage, do a swinging ladder turn, and appear in the spec and ballet. Manny will be 24-hour man, assistant to George Johnson. James (Whitie) Morse, manager and legal adjuster for the show is currently on the job in the office at quarters. A final note said that Mr. Aylesworth, wardrobe man, with a number of assistants, is making new wardrobe for the parade and big show performance.

In mid-February word came that Milt Robbins, who had managed the Robbins sideshow the previous several years, would not return as he and his family had signed with Downie Bros. Circus for the 1927 season. Milt would have charge of the sideshow and his wife would do a musical act and second sight as part of the line-up.

Also in February it was reported in the trade publications that Kenneth R. Waite would again be in clown alley on Robbins Bros. Others signed to clown on the show were Charles Robinson, last season with Lee Bros., O.E. Dops, clown policeman, Ralph Bliss, and Rube Dyer, who was with Walter L. Main Circus in 1926.

The Feb. 26, 1927 *Billboard* said that Buchanan had recently purchased the Christ & Howe Dog & Pony Show from Barrett & Zimmerman of St. Paul, Minn. At the same time Buchanan also purchased from that firm some posing, menage, and jumping horses. The Christ & Howe outfit had earlier been advertised for sale in the *Billboard*. Asking price was \$2,200 cash and included the entire show complete, fully equipped and all ready to go on the road. It consisted of 10 trained ponies, 7 trained dogs, 6 trained goats, 1 trained monkey, 1 callopie, 1 Ford truck, and all the tents, props, seats, lamps, lights, and

LARGEST CIRCUS TO APPEAR IN MISSISSIPPI IN YEARS '27



ROBBINS BROS.

4-RING CIRCUS

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29

WATER VALLEY

MISSISSIPPI



The Largest Street Parade in the World

1,000 PEOPLE 1,000

400 WILD ANIMALS 400

30 ELEPHANTS AND CAMELS 30

GET TWICE AS MUCH FOR YOUR MONEY

TWO PERFORMANCES AT 2 P. M.

Photo No. 1—Newspaper ad for Robbins Bros. stand at Water Valley, Miss., October 29, 1927. Pfening Collection.

all other paraphernalia and equipment used by the show. What animals and equipment Buchanan couldn't use for his Robbins Bros. Circus it is assumed he sold to other showmen.

In March information from the Granger quarters began to come regularly in the trade publications and almost every issue of the *Billboard* had news of Buchanan's show. The Mar. 5, 1927 *Billboard* advised that John Schiller, auditor, was assisting manager James Morse and equestrian director, Bert Rickman, at the Robbins quarters. Will Buchanan, publicity director of the show, was back at his home in Des Moines after an extended absence. Final item said that Carmine and Albert Zingaro would be in charge of the balloon and novelty concessions during the coming season.

The March 12, 1927 *Billboard* had this interesting article headed, FOREIGN ACTS BOOKED BY ROBBINS BROS. SHOW. It read as follows.

"Granger, Ia., March 3 - The Robbins Bros. Circus has booked the famous Raul Saurez family of riders

of Mexico. This will be their first appearance in the States. The Saurez family has long been considered the premier circus family of Mexico. The Ligazeed troupe of Arabs will make their first appearance in America with a circus with Robbins Bros. Circus this year. This act was brought over by Charles Sasse. The Tresarro Brothers, perch act, also an importation from Argentina, will make their first appearance under the big tops in this country this year with the Robbins Circus. The Matsamotke troupe of Japs, with the Robbins show the last two seasons, will again be with the show. All of the acts mentioned trouped together for two years in Central America, Mexico, and South America.

"The new hip den for the show is about completed. The cage is 20 feet long.

"The Riding Crandalls, John Corriea and family, the Wests, Jameson troupe of acrobats and the Beede family have been engaged.

"All of the parade wagons, with the exception of the hip den are out of the shop. The wardrobe is being made under the supervision of Bert Rickman. The show opens at Perry, Iowa, April 23."

The new hippo den being con-

structed was to house Miss Iowa, the Robbins animal which had made her first season with the show in 1926. (Author's note: This cage was not the long, pot bellied den currently at the Circus World Museum in Baraboo. The Baraboo wagon was indeed built for Miss Iowa but this was a couple of years later. The hippo den built at Granger in the early spring of 1927 is shown in photo no. 26).

The March 26, 1927 *Billboard* said that Buchanan had recently purchased a carload of prize winning horses from Barrett & Zimmerman of St. Paul, Minn. The horses, dapple gray, and weighing approximately 2,000 lbs. each were formerly owned by the White Satin Sugar Co. of Minneapolis. Also in this issue appeared this advertisement. "CALL, BILLPOSTERS, AND ALL ADVANCE PEOPLE. ROBBINS BROS. CIRCUS. Report at Winter Quarters, Granger, Iowa, April 7. Frank R. Ballenger, car manager."

In the spring of 1927 a new 15 car railroad circus was framed in Omaha, Neb. by Arthur Hoffman and Leo B. Crook. Information appearing in the trade publications said that Hoffman would serve as manager and R.M. Harvey would handle the publicity and act as general agent. It was reported the show would have a big menagerie, use special billing matter, and be equipped with electric lights. Plans were for the show to stay west of the Mississippi. Bulk of the equipment would be from the 10 car, F. J. Taylor Circus of 1925 which was stored in Omaha. Additional rail cars were obtained from the Venice Transportation Co. and some were leased from Fred Buchanan. The exact number and type of cars coming

Photo No. 3—Robbins Bros. polar bear cage at Topeka, Kan., July 23, 1927. CHS member Jim McRoberts took photos No. 3-7 that day at the Topeka Free Fair grounds lot. These are the first circus photos ever taken by him. Jim McRoberts Photo.

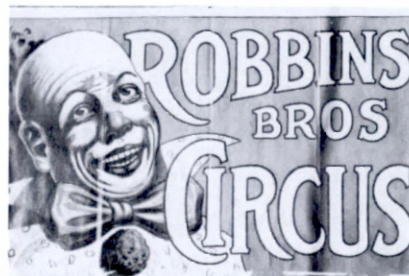
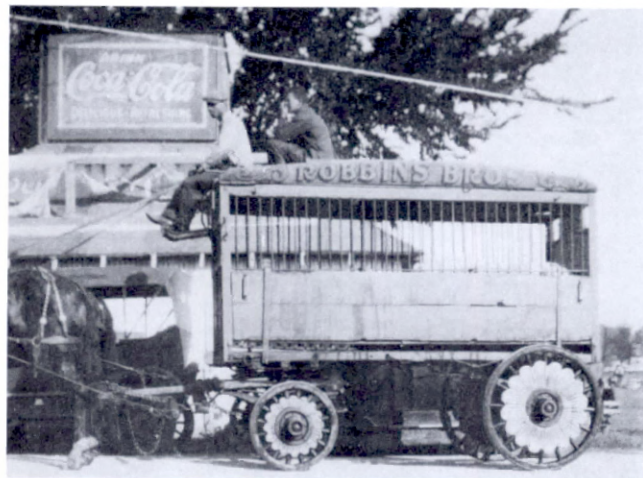


Photo No. 2—Robbins Bros. used this litho featuring a large clown and the show's title during the period 1925-29. Kent Ghirard Collection.

from Buchanan is not known to the author. Buchanan had earlier sold some equipment and cars to the short lived F. J. Taylor Circus back in 1925. When ready to roll Hoffman and Crook's new show would have 1 advance, 4 stocks, 6 flats, and 4 sleepers. Title of the show eventually was Cook & Cole's 3 Ring Circus, however in the April 9, 1927 *Billboard* was an advertisement for the show wanting big show performers, riders, musical director, bosses in all departments, people in all branches of the circus business etc. The show was set to open in Omaha in May, and the title used in the advertisement was World Bros. Circus, the name Buchanan had used on his show in 1923. Perhaps, originally, it was planned to use this title, but in any event the show went out under the Cook & Cole title. The history of this short lived show which opened May 21 at Manning, Iowa and closed June 2 in Fairmont, Minn. appeared as part of the article covering the Frank J. Taylor circuses and was printed in the May-June 1963 *Bandwagon*.

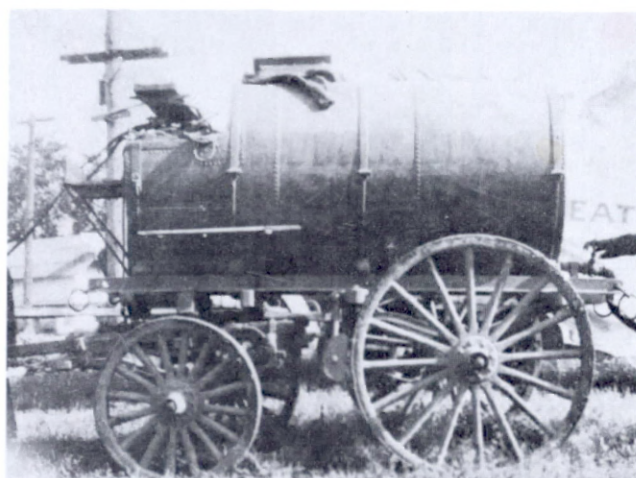
Back in early March there had been a report in the *Billboard* that Robbins Bros. would join the hegira of shows headed for the East in the coming season and will be seen in central Illinois in May. Although it had been

rumored for some seasons that Buchanan would route Robbins Bros. into the eastern states the 1927 route wouldn't vary much from those in the past. Buchanan would stick to his proven mid-western territory. The April 9, 1927 *Billboard* said that Robbins would play Peoria, Ill., April 27, but would not use the regular lot at Lakeview Park. Instead a lot outside the city limits would be utilized, the oval inside the mile track on the grounds of the Greater Peoria Exposition.

Some confusion exists as to the size of the 1927 Robbins Bros. train. The Haviriland files put the show on 30 cars for 1927 however this is believed to be in error and in reality Robbins didn't roll on that number until 1928. In 1926 the show closed the season on 24 cars — 1 advance, 5 stocks, 11 flats, and 7 coaches. The late Col. W.H. Woodcock Sr. once told me that in 1927 Robbins Bros. travelled on a total of 25 cars, however he made no breakdown as to the type and number of cars. In all probability the additional car used in 1927 was a flat. An educated speculation would then have the 1927 Robbins show moving on 1 advance, 5 stocks, 12 flats, and 7 coaches. It is indeed possible the show went out on 24 cars, same number and type as in 1926, and that when the new equipment purchases from Ringling-Barnum were made in June (to be mentioned later) another flat car was added. In any event the only positive info we have on the 1927 train is that which came from Woodcock — it had 25 cars.

Parade wagons in use at the beginning of the season would include the Spellman set, Belgium, United States, Great Britain, France, Africa (often

Photo No. 4—Robbins Bros. water tank wagon at Topeka, Kan., July 23, 1927. This may have been the water wagon Robbins purchased at the old Sells-Floto quarters in Denver in 1926. Jim McRoberts Photo.



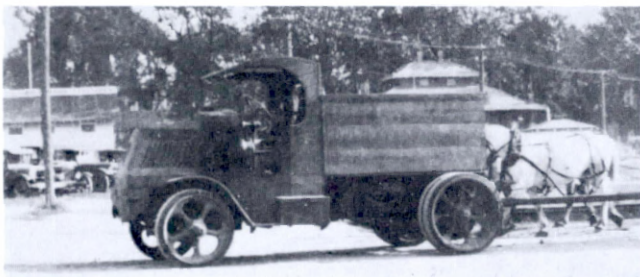


Photo No. 5—Robbins Bros. Mack truck at Topeka, Kan., July 23, 1927. Jim McRoberts Photo.

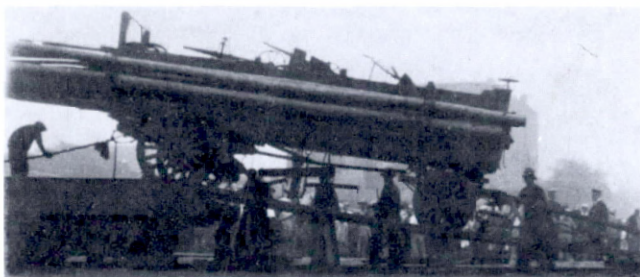


Photo No. 8—Robbins Bros. pole wagon coming down runs at McCook, Neb., Aug. 12, 1927. Photo by Joe Fleming.

called India or Hippo), China, Panama, and South America. Photos show that the No. 1 big show band rode the Belgium tableau and the No. 2 band dressed as sailors rode United States. The steam calliope housed in the old Forepaugh Lion chariot wagon was pulled by the Mack truck in the parade and the former Yankee Robinson air calliope had a pony hitch. Elephants in the parade marched in pairs.

The 1927 Robbins Bros. elephant herd had a total of ten, Columbia, Trilby, Blanche, Ena, Vera, Little Babe, Big Jenny, Margaret, Big Katie, and Tony. Vera was billed as Big Bingo. Three elephants which had been on the show in 1926 and leased from William B. Hall, were not present in 1927. These were Tommy, Ding, and Boo. They went out at start of the season with the new Cook & Cole Circus and after that show folded, later were booked for fairs and other celebrations.

The 1927 circus season was now at hand. Railroad shows, flat car type, going out included Ringling-Barnum 100 cars; Sells-Floto 30 cars; Hagenbeck-Wallace, 30 cars; John Robinson, 30 cars; Al G. Barnes, 30 cars; Robbins Bros., 25 cars; Christy Bros., 25 cars; Sparks, 20 cars; Walter L. Main, 15 cars; Gentry Bros., 10 cars; and Cook & Cole, 15 cars. Another major flat car type show was Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West Show on 25 cars. Also on the road was Elmer H. Jones' 3 car, Cooper Bros. Circus.

Overland circuses included Downie Bros., Mighty Haag, Seils-Sterling, Hunt's, Atterbury & Mighty Hooze, Honest Bill, Moon Bros., Zellmar Bros., M.L. Clark & Sons, Orton Bros., O'Neil Bros., LaMont Bros., Rogers Bros., Vanderburg Bros., Stark Bros., Davidson Bros., Henry Bros., Rose Killian, Foster Bros., Daly Bros., Ketrow Bros., Dorsey Bros., Silvan-Drew, Richards Bros., and Great Keystone. A few of the overland outfits were fully motorized but most of them moved with a combination of trucks and horse drawn wagons.

Railroad shows parading were Robbins Bros., Christy Bros., Sparks,

Walter L. Main, Gentry Bros., and Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West Show. A number of the larger overland shows also put on the daily march.

Robbins Bros. opened the 1927 season April 23 at Perry, Iowa. The May 7, 1927 *Billboard* covered the initial stand as follows:

"ROBBINS BROS. SHOW HAD SPLENDID OPENING. Perry, Iowa, April 28 —

"Fred Buchanan's Robbins Bros. Circus, enlarged since last year, opened here last Saturday to big business. With all new canvas and everything freshly painted, the show made a beautiful picture on the lot. The parade came in for much praise all along the line.

"Before the Big show opened O. A. Gilson and his band of 25 pieces gave an hour's concert, which was greatly enjoyed by the audience. The performance, under the direction of Bert Rickman, went over with a bang.

"It began with a new pageant, Santa Claus in Circusland, the participants being gorgeously garbed. Marie Duffy is soloist, assisted by Carle Bruce. In order came the following acts; Smith's dogs and ponies, elephants, Matsamoko Japanese Troupe in a balancing turn, Kenneth Waite and clown walkaround, menage horses, dogs and Liberty ponies, Riding Crandalls, Riding Sureaz and clown walkaround, concert announcement—Ponca Bill and cowboys and girls; also Gus Karras, wrestler; 14 girls on ladders, and Miss Duffy,

Photo No. 6—Robbins Bros. elephants on lot at Topeka, Kan., July 23, 1927. Jim McRoberts Photo.



soloist, on stage—leaping dogs, clown walkaround, Sureaz Troupe, Chester Sherman and his dancing clown, pony express and Indians; Bishop Bros., aerialists; Matsumoko Japs, on the perch; Ligazeed Arabs on stage, and Sureaz on perch; races—standing, Roman, pony, Liberty, girl jockey, cowboy, cowgirl and tandem; roping, all around the track, on stage and in rings; Riding Sureaz and Riding Crandalls, Gunn Sisters, Georgia Jones, Mazie Floto, Peggy Marshall and Lady Privett, iron-jaw artistes; English fox hunt and jumping horses; slide-for-life, by Matsumoko; pageant, America.

"The show is featuring three new high-jumping horses, ridden by Ruth Privett, Evelyn Morris and Peggy Marshall. The Bishop Bros. (Cain and Albert) are back under the white tops after many years absence. They were formerly with the Adam Forepaugh Circus. Their act consists of revolving ladders and talking-clown numbers.

"The personnel: Fred Buchanan, owner and manager; William Buchanan, advance press; Whitie Morris, assistant manager; John Schiller, auditor; Robert Schiller, adjuster; Les Minger, treasurer; Earl Sennott, superintendent; Ed L. Brannan, railroad contractor; Robert Saul, press agent with show; Dan Hoffman and H. M. Hervey, contractors; Manie Gunn and George Johnson, 24 hour men; Frank Ballenger, manager advance car; W. Jones, inside tickets; Candy Meyers, assistant treasurer; Bert Rickman, equestrian director; Kenneth Waite, producing clown; O. A. Gilson, bandmaster; Warren Smith, boss hostler; Charles Rigsby, assistant; Ralph Noble, boss canvasman; Joe Holland, assistant; Harry Steinhouser, boss of props; Ed Heirner, steward; E. W. Meyers, boss sideshow canvas; Tom McKinney, assistant equestrian director.

"Ponca Bill's Wild West has Mack Runnels, Tom Privett, M. Booger Red Jr., Victor Cody, Tom McKinney, Oklahoma Red and Montana Bill."

"The No. 1 Side Show is managed by A. D. McCullum. On the front door is Harry Burnheart, and selling tickets

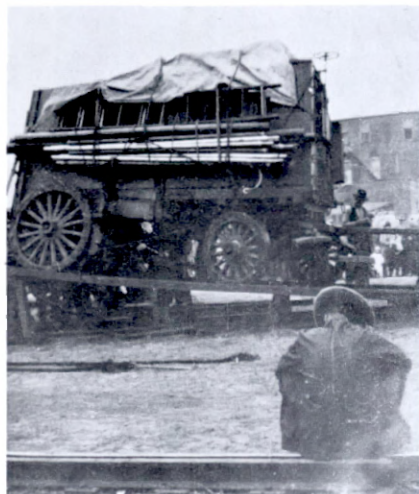


Photo No. 9—Baggage wagon coming down runs for Robbins Bros. stand at McCook, Neb., Aug. 12, 1927. One of the rear wheels has jumped the runs and the wagon had to be righted before it could proceed further. Photo by Joe Fleming.

are Jess McBride and Claude Collie. Joe Riggers' entertainers furnish the music, singing and dance numbers; Madam Elouise does mind reading; Tommy Arron, Punch and Judy; Marie Galluccia, dwarf; Mildred Galluccia, dancer; Elizabeth, Albino, Margarette, swords; Viola, snakes; Cuban Mack, swords and inside lecturer. The No. 2 Side Show is managed by Peggy Poole and Goldie Arnold. Snakes and freak animals are in it.

"The candy stands are in charge of Lonnie Buchanan and Moss Becker, who have 20 butchers. Earl Sennott and Buttons have the hotdog stand and the Zingaro Bros. the balloons and birds.

"In the menagerie are John Schultz, Soldier Johnson, Bert Wallace, Francis Hogan and 20 other men. There are 16 cages of animals, 10 elephants, a hippopotamus, 10 camels, 8 reindeer for spec, 2 baby camels, baby elephant, baby leopard, 2 baby monkeys, 2 sacred cows, herd of Scottish cattle, several ostriches and many black Shetland ponies."

The review article also listed the members of O.A. Gilson's band and the following joeys in clown alley: Jack King, Ruddy McPherson, Milton Woodward, Jack Rube Dyer, Jack McKay, Elmer Gray, Johnnie Delmar, Abe Bishop, Cain Bishop, Robert Standng, Roy Smith, Howard Bryant, O.E. Dops, Ray Holmes, Nate Leon, Frank Shipman, Henry Bedow, Chester Sherman, Three James Bros. and Charles Robinson.

Additional notes on some of the clowns said that Howard Bryant had spent the past two seasons with Christy Bros. and that Chester Sherman was working the come-in making his

9th season with Fred Buchanan.

Not listed in the roster of personnel was Frank Baker, trainmaster and Roy Jewell, supt. of ring stock. Several changes in department heads took place during the season. The official route book has Joe Lloyd, boss hostler, and J.E. Ogden, manager of the main sideshow. Neither the *Billboard* nor the route book lists a superintendent of elephants, only John Schultz as overall menagerie boss. Both Soldier Johnson and Bert Wallace were well known elephant men and evidently they were in charge of the herd. C.H. (Hi-pockets) Baudendistel who had come up with the three Hall leased elephants in 1926, Tommy, Ding, and Boo, and been in charge of the full Robbins herd that season was not on the show in 1927. He had gone with the Hall elephants to Cook & Cole and later on dates at fairs and celebrations.

Please note that the mention of 16 cages in the menagerie should not be interpreted as 16 separate cage wagons. W.H. Woodcock Sr. said that Robbins Bros. got up to a total of 12 cage wagons some seasons but no more. Reviewers often would count a cage compartment as a separate cage but the more prominent method is to consider a "cage" as a single wagon regardless of the number of individual compartments that it might have.

An interesting observation on the performances presented by Buchanan's show since he returned to circus ownership in 1923 is that for the first season his program contained caged wild animal acts but none had appeared since then. In addition to the heavy emphasis on the wild west angle, Buchanan's programs also had many quality circus acts, the type that would be found with Sells-Floto, Hagenbeck-Wallace, and John Robinson.

After the Perry opening the show moved immediately into Illinois for a stand at Rock Island, Monday, April 25. Additional dates in the state came at Peoria and Galesburg, then it was back into Iowa to play Ft. Madison, April 29, which was followed by a move into Missouri and a single stand in Hannibal. May 1 found Robbins back in Illinois for a Sunday date at Quincy. Thus in just a week into the new season the show had already crossed state lines four times which was typical of Buchanan's routing. Additional Illinois stands on this second visit to the state came at Macomb, Canton, Jacksonville, Bloomington, Joliet, Ottawa, and Geneseo, May 9, which was the final date during this particular tour. Virtually nothing appeared in the *Billboard* about the early weeks of the Robbins season other than it was mentioned that the show experienced very inclement weather during the



Photo No. 10—Ring horses just unloaded from Robbins Bros. stock cars, McCook, Neb., Aug. 12, 1927. In foreground is old "Silver," a silvery salmon colored Appaloosa which was the pride and pet of the wild west department. Photo by Joe Fleming.

first two. The spring of 1927 was very wet throughout the mid-west and many circuses fought rain and mud at their early stands.

The *Billboard* had a note that F.D. Gardner had written that he caught Robbins Bros. at its opening date in Perry, Iowa and that the performance and parade are very good. Some of the oldtimers with the show are Smithy, boss hostler, Charlie Riley, assistant; "Camel Dutch" on animals, J.J. (Soldier) Johnson, elephants, Ralph (Slim) Noble, boss canvasman, and Poke O'Brien who is on the top.

Robbins returned to Iowa at Muscatine, April 10, then played Iowa City, Grinnell, Indianola, and Creston before moving into Nebraska for Nebraska City, Lincoln, Hastings, North Platte, Kearney, and Columbus.

A long Sunday run of 204 miles, May 22, moved the show again into Iowa for performances, Monday, May 23 in Sioux City, LeMars, Cherokee, Webster City, Storm Lake, and Estherville, completed the week in the home state. Another Sunday run of 140 miles over the Rock Island RR took the show into Minnesota to play Faribault, Mankato, and on June 1 at Marshall. During this period the Cook & Cole Circus to which Buchanan had leased equipment was limping along due to a series of stands played in the rain and mud which killed business at the ticket wagon. Fred Buchanan visited Cook & Cole to look over the situation when the show played Wells, Minn. and shortly thereafter the new circus folded on June 2 in Fairmont, Minn. It was broke and the personnel stranded. A benefit performance

given in Fairmont helped some. Buchanan immediately sent Robert Schiller to Fairmont to look after his interest and other creditors including F.J. Taylor Jr. also appeared on the scene. At the time, it was announced by Buchanan that he planned to later route Robbins Bros. into Fairmont to pick up the rail cars he had leased to Cook & Cole.

Following the Minnesota stands Robbins Bros. next headed west fast moving across South Dakota playing Watertown, Aberdeen, and Mobridge, which was the final date in the state. Then came a run of 210 miles over the Milwaukee RR on Sunday, June 5, to Baker, Montana where performances were given that day. The train arrived in Baker in a heavy downpour.

Other Montana played were Miles City, Roundup, Lewistown, Great Falls, Havre, Glasgow, Bainville, and Plentywood.

After Montana towns the show then headed eastward moving through North Dakota with initial stand at Stanley, June 14 which was followed by Minot, Kenmare, Carrington, Cooperstown, and Fargo.

In the meantime Buchanan had sent Robert Schiller serving as assistant manager for Robbins Bros. to the Ringling-Barnum winterquarters at Bridgeport, Conn. and there purchased the famous Two Hemispheres bandwagon, the former Barnum & Bailey hippo den, the former Barnum & Bailey steam calliope (commonly called the clown and horn wagon), and one of the former Barnum & Bailey set of pony size tableau floats, Santa Claus. Another large tableau-den with corner statues which was on Robbins Bros. in 1929 for certain (possibly also in 1928) is believed to have been purchased at the same time. The *Billboard* report also mentions animals being bought including two elephants, however the latter is believ-

Photo No. 11—The "Sugar Six" hitch on the Robbins Bros. lot at McCook, Neb. Aug. 12, 1927. This team, formerly owned by the White Satin Sugar Co., had been purchased earlier in the year. It was the finest team and had the best harness of any on the show. Photo by Joe Fleming.



ed to have been in error, at least they did not come on the Robbins show. The reader might be interested in the full account of Buchanan's purchases at Bridgeport which appeared in the June 11, 1927 *Billboard* as follows.

"BUCHANAN ENLARGES MENAGERIE. The Robbins Bros. Circus now has one of the largest and finest of menageries. Assistant Manager Robert Schiller has returned from a trip to Bridgeport, Conn. where he bought five dens of wild animals from John Ringling. The animals include tigers, hyenas, lions, five large camels and two elephants. Owner Fred Buchanan has 18 cages of animals. John (Camel Dutch) Schultz is superintendent of this department and is assisted by Francis Hogan. Mr. Buchanan also bought a big band wagon and two big tableau wagons from Mr. Ringling."

It is believed that Buchanan actually got only two wagons, the two mentioned before, which had distinctive Barnum & Bailey carvings, statues, etc. The *Billboard* article didn't say when and to where Buchanan would ship his new purchases but the implication that at least some equipment and animals would join Robbins Bros. enroute.

Curiously, the same June 11, 1927 *Billboard* had an article in the column adjacent to the Buchanan story which said that Christy Bros. Circus had recently played Baraboo, Wis., former winterquarters town of Ringling Bros., and while there the show picked up and added to the parade two bandwagons and two tableaux. Christy Bros. a few years earlier had purchased former parade wagons at Bridgeport. Floyd and Howard King had also earlier purchased former Ringling parade wagons at Baraboo as well as other equipment from Bridgeport. The Cinderella, Mother Goose and Old Woman in Shoe had been spirited out of Baraboo by Buchanan early in 1927.

Robbins Bros. after completing its North Dakota dates next returned to Minnesota for its second visit of the season and played stands at Detroit, Little Falls, Wadena, Fergus Falls, Morris, Litchfield, Willmar and Pipestone. The show moved over into South Dakota to play Sioux Falls, June 30, but returned immediately to Minnesota for Worthington the next day. Next the route took the show back into Iowa at Emmetsburg, July 2, which was followed by New Hampton and Mason City. The July 23, 1927 *Billboard* said that when the show was at Mason City, Iowa, July 5, three new cages were added. Also coming on the show was a zebra, buffalo, 20 head of black and dapple grey draft horses and 10 high school horses. In the same article mention was made that two new sleepers, two stock cars, and

three flats arrived in the Granger winterquarters to be repainted and put in shape for the 1928 season.

Unfortunately, we do not have any detailed explanation as to what all of this information means. The rail cars going to Granger could have been the ones that had been leased to Cook & Cole and being returned to Buchanan after that show folded, or they could have been cars acquired elsewhere. Later in the season it was mentioned in the trade publications that Robbins Bros. was definitely going to be enlarged to 30 cars for the 1928 season so no doubt Buchanan was assembling the equipment now. As for the cages added to the show on July 5 in Mason City, Iowa it is possible the former Barnum & Bailey hippo den came on the show at that time and the zebra and buffalo could have been housed in it. While this den was on Robbins Bros. it carried large hay eating animals and was never used to house the hippo. There's a good chance the Two Hemispheres wagon was added at Mason City at the same time as it is definitely shown in photos taken a few weeks later. As for the Barnum & Bailey steam calliope, the other tableau den, and the four pony floats, it is believed they were sent on for storage in Granger and wouldn't make an appearance on Robbins Bros. until 1928. For sure the steamer housed in the old Forepaugh Lion Chariot wagon continued for the remainder of 1927. Joe Fleming who caught the show at McCook, Neb. doesn't remember the pony floats on the show in 1927 and neither are they pictured in the rather extensive photo coverage we have.

The famed Two Hemispheres wagon was a major addition to the Robbins Bros. parade, however it was not put into use as a bandwagon, but was placed in the center of the march being pulled by an eight horse hitch. A group of Sioux Indians rode on the top. In later seasons witnesses have said at times a single Indian in full dress regalia was seated in top center

Photo No. 13—Robbins Bros. cage with four horse hitch on lot at McCook, Neb., Aug. 12, 1927. Photo by Joe Fleming.



of the wagon during the street parade. The Two Hemispheres had been built by Sebastian for the 1903 Barnum & Bailey street parade and had remained on that show throughout the life of the circus, or the 1918 season. During 1905 and 1906 when Barnum & Bailey did not parade no doubt the wagon was left in the Bridgeport quarters until Buchanan bought it.

Although Buchanan didn't put the four pony floats on his show until 1928 he truly now owned an outstanding parade feature. The late Richard E. Conover covered the history of these plus other similar wagons in his article in the Sept.-Oct. 1960 *Bandwagon* titled, "Those Diminutive Tableaus, The Allegorical Pony-Drawn Parade Floats." Conover wrote that Santa Claus and Old Woman in Shoe were built in 1883 for Barnum & London and Mother Goose and Cinderella later in the period 1886-88 for the same show.

On July 6 Robbins returned to Minnesota and played Fairmont, the town where Cook & Cole folded back on June 2. At that time it was mentioned that Buchanan might play Fairmont later and pick up the rail cars belonging to him that had been leased to Cook & Cole and when he was there, July 6, could have very well have done just that. Or as noted earlier it is possible these cars had already been shipped to Granger. Unfortunately, we have so little information on the true situation it is impossible to present a clear picture of exactly what did happen.

Other dates in Minnesota were at Albert Lea and Owatonna, then the show went back into Iowa to play Cresco, July 9, after which came a 108 mile Sunday run over the Milwaukee RR to Richland Center, Wis. where performances were given on Monday, July 11. The July 30, 1927 *Billboard* said that Robbins was the first circus to play Richland Center in 9 years and that during the performance the

Photo No. 12—Robbins Bros. cage with pony hitch on lot at McCook, Neb., Aug. 12, 1927. Photo by Joe Fleming.



Photo No. 14—Belgium Tableau with No. 1 band ready for Robbins Bros. street parade at McCook, Neb., Aug. 12, 1927. Photo by Joe Fleming.

crowd was asked to leave the big top as a storm was coming. High winds blew down all of the show's tents on the lot except the menagerie and big top.

After the storm at Richland Center the show went back into Iowa for a two day visit, playing Pottsville and Independence, and afterwards moved into Illinois at Galena, July 14. The *Billboard* said that there was a long haul up steep hills to the lot in Galena and the elephants refused to cross a bridge on the way. (It is assumed they were able to somehow get the bulls to the lot that day.) After Savanna the next day, Robbins went back to Iowa to play Monticello, Ottumwa, and Osceola. At Osceola, July 19, fire broke out in the combination diner-sleeper (pie car) and it was completely destroyed. A similar type car was acquired two days later at St. Joseph, Mo. as a replacement. The following day, July 22, the show went into Kansas to play Atchison. Robbins continued to move on its route in true Buchanan fashion, dipping back and forth into a number of states, never remaining long in any of them. At

Topeka, Kansas, July 23, three performances were given. Also at Topeka, CHS member Jim McRoberts caught the show and took his first circus pictures ever. We are pleased to present several of these photos during this article.

One more Kansas stand was at Iola, July 25, then the show dipped down into Oklahoma for Bartlesville and Pawhuska, which was followed by a return to Kansas to play Arkansas City, Wichita, Hutchinson, Great Bend, McPherson, Salina, Beloit, Junction City, Clay Center, Marysville, and Sabetha, for an extraordinarily long state tour for a Buchanan circus. Robbins moved into Nebraska next where performances had been scheduled August 10 at Fairbury, the former winter home of the old Campbell Bros. Circus. According to the Aug. 27, 1927 *Billboard* a tornado struck the show as it was set up on the Fairbury lot and all tents with exception of the big top were blown down. Fortunately the big top had been lowered ahead of the winds and it suffered no damage. Heavy rains came with the storm and the grounds were flooded making it impossible to give a show.

Moving on through Nebraska the show played Red Cloud the next day, August 11, and then on to McCook on the 12th where three performances were given to take care of the huge crowds. At McCook, our long time friend and fellow CHS member Joe Fleming of Trenton, Neb., caught his favorite circus of all time, Robbins Bros. At our request Joe has very kindly put into writing some of his recollections of that day, as follows.

"Robbins Bros. Circus played McCook, Neb., Aug. 12, 1927 and as per usual we were on hand before the train pulled into town. They unloaded in a drizzle and the only thing that happened that I remember now is that one of the baggage wagons jumped the runs with the front wheels, but did not flip over and was soon righted. By

Photo No. 15—Robbins Bros. elephant herd on lot at McCook, Neb., Aug. 12, 1927. Photo by Joe Fleming.



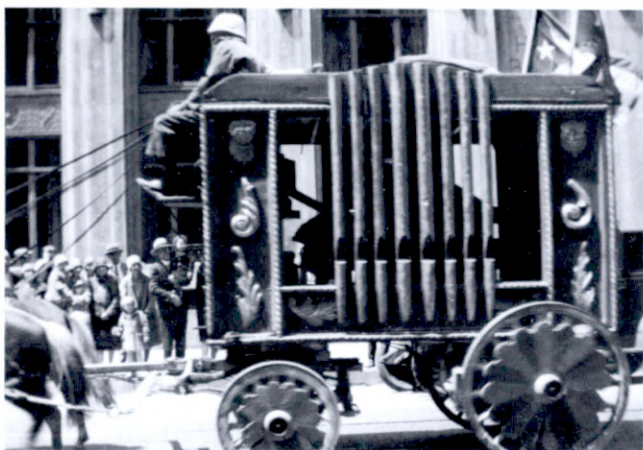


Photo No. 16—Robbins Bros air calliope (formerly Yankee-Robinson) in street parade, season of 1927. Joe Bradbury Collection.

parade time the sun was out and it turned out to be a beautiful day. The show had purchased a beautiful team of six dappled grays from some sugar company (White Satin Sugar Co. of Minneapolis) complete with a fine set of brass mounted harness that was more elaborate than even the best conventional circus harness. This team was known around the show as "The Sugar Six" and was the pride and joy of the hostlers.

"Once again the parade was led by three abreast flag bearers, a cowboy, a lady, and a Sioux Indian, and once again band leader, O.A. Gilson, sat on the right side of the front seat of the No. 1 bandwagon which was "Belgium," this wagon drawn by a six horse team of dappled grays, but not the "Sugar Six." They were hitched to the hippo den. The big Two Hemispheres wagon was pulled by eight grays and was loaded with Sioux Indians.

"The program started out with a nice spec with the band playing "Valencia" and the marchers all beating out the time on little drums and various chimes, and the mounted people all beating out the time with hand held bells. Bandleader Gilson was a good friend of ours and we sat by the band and this was a treat because that band was truly a fine circus band. A man stood just outside the tent and "spaced" the spec as it came near the backdoor, by telling the various people to "hurry a little," or "hold it a bit" depending upon the need. Gilson didn't go around the track with his band but instead he stood by the band stand and watched as the people came by, and if any of the marchers were out of step or out of line he would tell them to "get in step" or "get in line."

"The bass drummer was an exceptionally good one by the name of Craig Ferguson and Gilson said he never

paid any attention to Craig because he always knew that Craig would "be there." Ferguson had a light bulb in his drum to keep it tight and he had a head on each end of his stock, and the way that man drummed was really something else, especially on the old gallops.

"Although this circus always had a very good and fast moving performance I never knew them to have a flying act, but they had riding acts and everything else that it takes to make up a good program. They closed with the "Historic America" spec again this season. It was a nice night to tear it down and load it out, and as usual I got that same old sad feeling as I watched them pull up the runs because I knew it was all out and all over for that year as far as I was concerned."

Fleming said he was surprised to learn that the *Billboard* reporter who reviewed the opening performance of Robbins Bros. in Perry, Iowa that season wrote that the title of the opening spec was "Santa Claus in Circusland" especially since Gilson's band played "Valencia" as the spec moved around the hippodrome track in McCook. Fleming recalls that in 1929 when he saw Robbins Bros. the spec did have a Santa Claus theme and the opening musical number was the appropriate "March of the Toys."

Photo No. 19—Robbins Bros. flat cars unloading at Pittsfield, Ill., Aug. 29, 1927. Photo by Wade H. Maynard (Pfleing Collection).

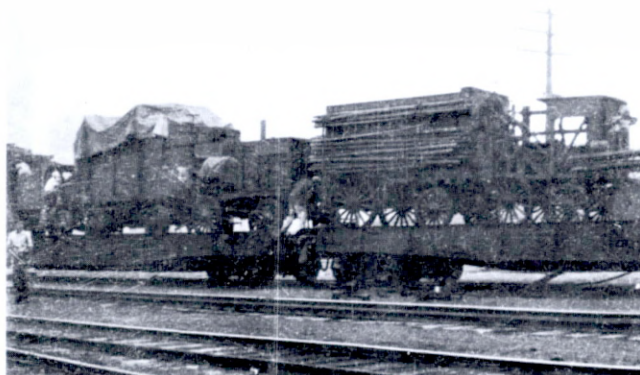


Photo No. 18—Robbins Bros. loaded flat cars at McCook, Neb., Aug. 12, 1927. Photo by Joe Fleming.

When questioned as to what wagons were on the show in 1927 which had recently been purchased from Bridgeport, Fleming said he remembered seeing only the Two Hemispheres wagon. Possibly the ex-Barnum & Bailey hippo den was there but he didn't recall it, but certainly the four pony floats were not on the show.

The Aug. 13, 1927 *Billboard* said that Joe Lloyd, late of Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus is now boss hostler of Robbins Bros. and Jess McBride is the new manager of the sideshow. (Author's note: Later in the season J.E. Ogden took over the sideshow.) Another item in the report said that Jimmy (Hammer) Duffy, visited Robbins Bros. at Great Bend, Aug. 1, where business was big at both shows.

After the stand in McCook the Robbins show continued in Nebraska with dates at Broken Bow, Central City, Albion, then was at West Point, Aug. 18, where three performances were given. The following day in Fremont again three performances were given. Robbins Bros. was now doing great business and on through the conclusion of the season would continue to draw heavily at most stands. Turn-aways would be registered at many. Fremont was the last of the Nebraska dates, then the show went once again into Iowa, this time to play Glenwood and Clarinda, and then on to Missouri



Photo No. 20—Robbins Bros. cage wagons coming down runs at Pittsfield, Ill., Aug. 29, 1927. Photo by Wade H. Maynard (Pfening Collection).

for Maryville, Cameron, Trenton, Kirksville, and Moberly. Trenton, Aug. 25, gave very poor business, in contrast to the others. The good take came back at Pittsfield, Ill., Aug. 29, where three performances were given and Wade H. Maynard took an outstanding number of photographs which are printed here. Mt. Sterling, Ill. followed Pittsfield, and after Carthage, Aug. 31, the show went into Missouri for Shelby and Chillicothe, then to Iowa for only one stand, Hamburg, Sept. 3. A second visit to Nebraska was next, with dates at Norfolk on Labor Day, Sept. 5, then O'Neil, Ainsworth, and at Chadron and Alliance, afternoon performances only were given. Final date in the state at Scottsbluff, Sept. 10, was a big day for business. The tour of Colorado which followed saw only one stand, Brush, Sept. 12, and it was back to Nebraska for a third time to play Sidney, Ogallala, Lexington, David City, and Tecumseh, Sept. 17, where Paul V. Sowash joined to play calliope with the show. Moving on eastward Robbins entered Missouri Sept. 19 at Carrollton where two turnaways were experienced. Mexico, Mo. was next, and at Marshall, Sept. 21, there were again two turnaways. Boonville, Clinton, and Nevada completed the tour of the state on this leg of the route.

The show went into Kansas at

Photo No. 22—Robbins Bros. polar bear cage in rail yards at Pittsfield, Ill., Aug. 29, 1927. Note the depot sign in background. Photo by Wade H. Maynard (Pfening Collection).



Photo No. 21—Robbins Bros. train unloading at Pittsfield, Ill., Aug. 29, 1927. At left is a heavily loaded baggage wagon and in center the dog wagon stands in front of the railroad depot. Note huge billing daub on the barn at top center. Photo by Wade H. Maynard (Pfening Collection).



Photo No. 17—Steam calliope player "Crazy Ray" Choiser standing in front of the Robbins Bros. Forepaugh Lion chariot steamer about 1927. Joe Rettinger Collection (Originally from Manny Gunn who was on the show).

Fredonia, Sept. 26 which was followed by Caldwell the next day, and then a trip to Oklahoma for stands at Enid, Watonga, Clinton, and Altus. The Oct. 15, 1927 *Billboard* had an interesting account of the Robbins tour of this area. The article said the show had recently experienced some cold weather. Sunday and Monday (Sept. 25-26) in Fredonia, Kan. were cold and rainy days. On Monday it was so cold that everybody wore their winter wraps. The matinee crowd that day was the smallest so far of the season but the night attendance was fair. Caldwell, Kan. on Tuesday (Sept. 27) was a miserable day. Rain and snow fell and there was a strong wind. Business was above average at the matinee and fair at night. In spite of cold weather at Enid, Okla. there was a fair matinee crowd and good night business. There was fine weather at

Watonga, Okla. Sept. 29, with a big crowd at the matinee and fine night house. At Clinton, Okla. there was a capacity house at the matinee and big night crowd. Despite rain nearly all day at Altus, Okla. (Oct. 1) there was a big matinee and capacity house at night. A final note said that following the season the Liazeed Troupe of Arabs will open on the Keith-Albee vaudeville circuit at Akron, Ohio on Nov. 13. Another group of Robbins performers who planned to go on the Pantages circuit when the season closes consists of Chester Sherman, female impersonator, Nick Gallucci, soloist and classical dancer, and Charles Robinson, tenor, who will present a singing, dancing, and acrobatic act with special wardrobe and scenery.

The show went into Texas October 3 to play Wellington but returned immediately to Oklahoma for Mangum the next day. At Hobart, Okla., Oct. 5, there was a turnaway at the matinee. Two other stands in the state were scheduled, Anadarko, Oct. 6, and the show was booked for Lindsay on the 7th but the town could not be played because of heavy rains which flooded the lot. Rain was heavy the following day at Gainesville, Texas but perfor-

Photo No. 23—Robbins Bros. street parade at Pittsfield, Ill., Aug. 29, 1927. In foreground is the United States tableau with No. 2 band being pulled by a six horse hitch. Camels are following. Photo by Wade H. Maynard (Pfening Collection).



mance were given. A final stand in Oklahoma came Oct. 10 at Idabel, then Robbins moved over into Arkansas and at the very first stand, Hope, there was splendid business. Other dates in the state were at Nashville, El Dorado, Fordyce, Pine Bluff, Paragould, Blytheville, and Jonesboro.

The Oct. 29, 1927 *Billboard* covered the Robbins tour through this region and said that there was a big matinee crowd and capacity business at night at Idabel, Okla. Oct. 10 and at Hope, Ark. there was a packed tent at the matinee and a turnaway at night. Nashville, Ark. saw a big matinee and capacity night house. El Dorado, produced capacity at the matinee and turnaway business in the evening. At Fordyce, Ark. Robbins followed the country fair and a carnival company but still attracted two fair-sized houses. In Pine Bluff, Ark. there were capacity houses at both performances. Other notes said that Nick Gallucci and Chester Sherman have recovered from an accident. While rehearsing their new acrobatic act they accidentally fell from a high pedestal which broke. Although quite badly hurt they managed to attend to their duties with the show. The sideshow, managed by J.E. (Doc) Ogden is doing excellent business and Mrs. Mary Rickman is making a decided hit with her bareback riding with the Raul Saurez family of riders.



Photo No. 25—Robbins Bros. street parade, Pittsfield, Ill., Aug. 29, 1927. In foreground is the Africa (also called India or Hippo) tableau with Indians atop. Following is the Two Hemispheres wagon, also with Indians atop, being pulled by an eight horse hitch. Photo by Wade H. Maynard (Pfening Collection).

The show went into Mississippi at New Albany, Oct. 20 which was followed by other dates in the state at Aberdeen, Macon, Okalona, Meridian, Starkville, Durant, Winona, and Water Valley. Floyd and Howard King's 10 car Gentry Bros. Circus had earlier played in Mississippi and sup-



Photo No. 24—Line of cage wagons in Robbins Bros. street parade, Pittsfield, Ill., Aug. 29, 1927. Photo by Wade H. Maynard (Pfening Collection).

posedly hurt Robbins' business at Starkville, Oct. 26. Gentry had also played ahead of Robbins at Water Valley. The Nov. 5, 1927 *Billboard* covered the Robbins route in the area and said that the show played to a fine matinee house and big night crowd at Paragould, Ark., Oct. 17. At Blytheville, Ark., Oct. 18, there was a good matinee and turnaway at night. Jonesboro, Ark. packed them to the ring banks at the matinee and a turnaway at night. New Albany, Miss., Oct. 20, saw a capacity matinee and big night house. Aberdeen, Miss. was full in the afternoon and a large house present in the evening. Two capacity

crowds came at Macon, Miss. Oct. 22. In Starkville, Miss., Oct. 26, the show discounted any hurt in the take by Gentry Bros. and claimed huge business that day, noting that 12,000 were in attendance for the two performances (obviously an exaggeration). In any event the date in Starkville was a gala occasion as two thousand students from nearby Mississippi State University attended the show, along with their 40 piece band and glee club. Additional notes in the report said that the Krell Comedians Company motored from Staggart, Ark. to Jonesboro to see the matinee performance. Russell Hervey and Manny Gunn, local contractors, have finished their season's work and returned to the show. Will T. and Bob Buchanan on the publicity staff visited at Albany, Miss. O.A. Gilson, bandmaster, has written a new musical number, "To You, Dear Old Southland," which is being sung by Will Holebrook in the concert before the big show begins.

Leaving Mississippi the show moved into Kentucky to play Fulton, Oct. 31, and ran into extremely cold weather. According to the late E.W. Adams who furnished the 1927 Robbins route to the author many years

Photo No. 26—Robbins Bros. street parade, Pittsfield, Ill., Aug. 29, 1927. At left is the hippo den with Miss Iowa, followed by Camel Dutch Schultz (John Narfski) and the herd of ten elephants. Photo by Wade H. Maynard (Pfening Collection).





Photo No. 27—Robbins Bros. street parade, Pittsfield, Ill., Aug. 29, 1927. At left is the show's ten elephants marching in pairs and followed by the China tableau pulled by a four horse hitch. Bringing up the rear of the parade is the steam calliope (Forepaugh Lion Chariot) pulled by a Mack truck. Photo by Wade H. Maynard (Pfenning Collection).

ago, the season came to a close at Fulton, Ky. on October 31. Two additional stands had been booked, Nov. 1, Dyersburg, Tenn., and Nov. 2, at Carbondale, Ill. but both of these were cancelled and the show moved directly on to Granger after the final performance in Fulton. The official route book lists the two cancelled stands but this is not unusual as the books were sent to the printers some weeks before the end of the season so that they could be available for sale to the troupers before the closing stand. The *Billboard* made no reference to the cancellation of the two stands and earlier than scheduled end of the season for Robbins. Information added to the Robbins 1927 route by E.W. Adams said that this was the biggest season in the history of Robbins Bros. It gave 3 performances at 11 stands. The largest day's business was at Wichita, Kan., July 29. The show made 9 stands in Mississippi, virgin territory for Robbins Bros. but the state gave good business. Total mileage according to the route book was 14,165.

The printed route book for the 1927

season was the first one ever issued for Robbins Bros. The book contained advertisements for the Erie Lithographing and Printing Co. and Standard Litho & Print Co., a sure indication Robbins purchased billing paper from both firms during the season. Another page ad was for The Baker-Lockwood Mfg. Co. which said that Robbins Bros. used canvas tents made by that firm. The Mt. Vernon Car Mfg. Co. also had a page advertising their new all steel 70 ft. flat, stock, and elephant cars. Buchanan had purchased both flats and stocks from Mt. Vernon and the firm ran an advertisement in the Oct. 29, 1927 *Billboard* with a photo of a stock car with the Robbins Bros. title on the letterhead.

By the end of November the 1927

circus season had ended for most of the circuses. A few, as usual, would play well into the winter months in the deep south. The season had been pretty good for the majority of shows. The late 20's were generally prosperous business years and travelling shows benefited from that fact. The spring, in fact well into the summer, had been wet and some shows were plagued with rain, mud, and wind for much of the season. John Robinson especially was hard hit. Buchanan's Robbins Bros. had indeed had its best season and history would later record that 1927 had been the most prosperous year ever for the show.

All was quiet from the Granger quarters in the trade publications for several weeks following the Robbins close. An advertisement appeared in the Dec. 10, 1927 *Billboard* as follows, "Wanted 25 Clowns for Robbins Bros. Circus. Opening early in April. Long, pleasant season. Clown doubling in Clown Band given preference. Address Kenneth Waite. Coates House, Kansas City, Mo."

Buchanan finally made his big announcement in the Dec. 22, 1927 *Billboard*. Robbins Bros. in 1928 would be a 30 car show, with new steel flat cars, stocks, and coaches. New riding acts, aerial turns, and a new spec would be features. A new big top, a 150 ft. round with four 50 ft. middles would be used, and in the menagerie would be 15 elephants, 13 camels, and 20 dens of wild animals would be carried. The number of animals planned for the enlarged show would prove to be somewhat exaggerated as would be the size of the big top, however Buchanan's show would indeed go out on 30 cars and would travel on as many as any of the current railers on the road with exception of Ringling-Barnum. Indeed Buchanan would be up there with the big boys.

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CIRCUS WAGON HISTORY FILE

The Barnum and Bailey/Buffalo Bill Ticket Wagon

by Frederick Dahlinger, Jr.

Awaiting the time and money necessary for a thorough rebuild, the oldest circus ticket wagon in existence sits protected in the yard behind the elephant barn at the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin. Acquired in extremely poor condition in 1969, the wagon's origin can be traced back to before 1900. In compiling a history of the vehicle one is amazed at the number of photographs, in print, of this utilitarian vehicle which saw service on at least ten different shows.

As early as 1898 the Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth had two ticket wagons, both identical twins, one of them being the subject vehicle. One was painted white and the other presumably red, when they were photographed on the lot at Chester, England, on October 10, 1898.¹ The views snapped that day confirm that at one time two existed. The wagons measured about 10 feet high and fifteen feet long, fitted with a clerestory roof and a small drop bottom. The compact size of the wagons, as compared to contemporary ticket wagons, suggests they may have been built to fit the tighter clearances of the European railroads. The wagons were not pretentious, the only decoration being the show's title attractively painted on the sides. The ends of the wagons had three faces, each with a ticket window in it. Two other ticket windows were located in the middle of either side. Business must have been good when ten ticket sellers were required to sell big show tickets. Two small square ventilation doors fitted with bars were positioned in the front upper panels, as were similar vents on either side of the driver's footrest. A door spanning the full height of the body was located in the middle of the left side.

The white ticket wagon is shown as it was beautifully lettered for the Buffalo Bill show.



The white wagon used by the Barnum & Bailey show during its tour of Europe. The red ticket wagon was identical. All photos from the Pfening Col.

Both ticket wagons were used throughout the 1898 to 1902 European tour of Barnum & Bailey but remained behind with the train and baggage vehicles when the circus return-

ed to the U.S. Bailey sent the Buffalo Bill Wild West over to Europe to utilize this property including the two ticket wagons.

A photo appearing in the 1907 Buffalo Bill route book shows the two Barnum ticket wagons in a lot scene taken on March 22, 1905, in Rome, Italy.

To add confusion, a ticket wagon of





identical design was used on the McCaddon's Great International Shows, during its short tour of France in 1905. Joseph McCaddon, a brother-in-law of James A. Bailey, had long been connected with the Barnum & Bailey show and had served as associate director of the Barnum show during the five year tour of Europe ending in 1902. McCaddon's close relationship to Bailey would have given him access to Barnum equipment. The bulk of the McCaddon show consisted of equipment gained with the purchase of the Sig Sautelle show in 1904. Why and how, a third ticket wagon identical to the two European Barnum ticket wagons appeared on this show presents an interesting question. The McCaddon show equipment did not return to the United States following the closing of the show.

In 1903 the Barnum & Bailey show utilized the two ticket wagons that had been on the Buffalo Bill show previously. These vehicles were shorter and higher than the European Barnum & Bailey ticket wagons and

A ticket wagon of the same design as the two on Barnum & Bailey in Europe was on the McCaddon show in 1905. The origin of this wagon is unknown.

had a ventilator roof that covered the entire top. These two wagons did not have cutouts for the rear wheels.

The Barnum & Bailey show used both of the shorter ticket wagons for a number of years. The white wagon was replaced in 1910, with a ticket wagon with a single window at the rear. The white wagon was sold in 1910 to the Miller Bros. & Arlington Wild West. In 1916 the title of their show was Buffalo Bill and Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West, so the Buffalo Bill title was placed on this wagon for one last time.

The former Barnum & Bailey ticket wagons were emblazoned with the Buffalo Bill Wild West title in one of the most beautiful Victorian lettering

Replacing the wagons left in Europe were two shorter ones, without cutouts for the rear wheels. This wagon was used on the Barnum show from 1903 to 1909.



schemes ever on a circus wagon.² Considerable financial difficulties plagued the wild west show after it returned to the United States following its final year in Europe in 1906. The end of its independent operation finally came in May of 1907 when Gordon W. Lillie, "Pawnee Bill," acquired ownership of both the title and the show's equipment.



A rare photo of James A. Bailey standing next to the white ticket wagon during the European tour. It was lettered like this in 1898.

Lillie's show, known to historians as the Two Bills show, was not successful, eventually being attached when it played Denver, Colorado, on July 21, 1913. At the second sale of the show's assets on September 15, H.H. Tammen and Frederick G. Bonfils, principals in the Sells-Floto Circus, bought twenty two wagons including one of the former Barnum & Bailey ticket wagons. The account of the sale in the September 27, 1913 *Billboard* also noted that attorney John T. Bottom had purchased the iron strong box first used by P.T. Barnum on the Greatest Show on Earth. It was found in the ticket wagon the wild west had purchased from the Barnum & Bailey show, evidence conforming our earlier observations from photographs. The inventory for the auction lists both a red and a white ticket wagon but it is not known which one, or if both, went to Sell-Floto. One of the ticket wagons can be seen in the front yard of the 1917 Sells-Floto Circus.⁴

By the time the 1917 photo was taken its external appearance had been modified by the addition of sheet metal and half round wood moulding.



Following the auction sale of the Two-Bills show in 1913 the Baraboo wagon went to the Sells-Floto show. It is shown here on that show in 1917.

This skin covered the ticket windows which had been in the sides but the small louvers on the sides near the roofline were doubled in size, with a second one added on the left hand side. One suspects the modifications were an economical way of covering the original wood sides which had begun to deteriorate. Crude outside sunbursts, no more than painted circular discs, were also attached to the plain spoked wheels.

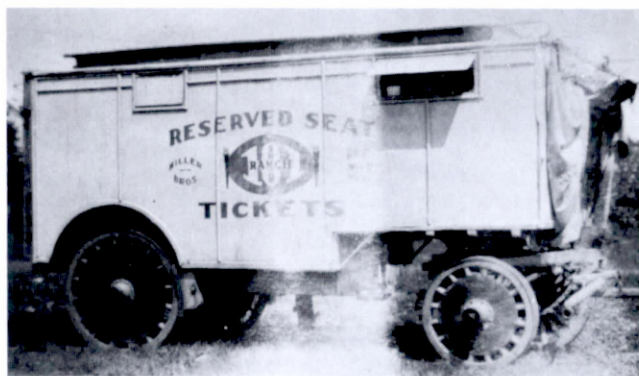
Tammen and Bonfils sold their circus after the 1920 season to Mugivan, Bowers and Ballard and quite quickly the show came under the direct in-

The Barnum white wagon was sold to Miller Bros. & Arlington in 1909. It is shown on the Buffalo Bill-101 Ranch Wild West in 1916.



fluence of the Indiana showmen. During the 1920-21 winter they framed a circus at the William P. Hall farm at Lancaster, Missouri, utilizing assets from both their Howes Great London Circus and Fred Buchanan's Yankee Robinson Circus that they had purchased from William P. Hall Jr. An air calliope, a hippo den and the hippo Victor were transferred from Sells-Floto to the Howes show in exchange for a male elephant Billy, later to become Snyder II. It is now evident that on the same car from Denver was the former Barnum & Bailey ticket wagon, for in 1921 it was on the Howes circus.⁴ A photograph purported to show the wagon on the Howes show a year earlier is believed to be misdated.⁵ The Howes show was retitled Gollmar Bros. Circus for the 1922 tour and the ticket wagon was there.⁶ The John Robinson title was affixed to the wagons in 1923 and 1924 and it is reasonable to assume the ticket wagon was still on the show.

In 1925, the Robinson equipment was sold piecemeal to showmen ready to get in on the amusement boom of the mid and late 1920's. In 1925 the Miller brothers decided to take out another version of the 101 Ranch Wild West and they were one of the shows to inspect the equipment at Peru. Photographs taken in 1926 show the



The ticket wagon went to the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch and was used on that show in 1926. Joe Fleming Photo.

ticket wagon on the Ranch show in a new white paint job selling reserved seat tickets.⁷ Another view places it on the show train in 1928.⁸

Evaluating their holdings for the 1928 season the Millers decided to sell a number of rail cars, wagons and other equipment. Their ad, in an early February 1928 *Billboard*, offered to sell "1 15 ft. Office and Ticket Wagon," the old Barnum & Bailey ticket wagon. From photographs taken years later it is known Fred Buchanan acquired the wagon, but it is unknown if he bought it then or direct, William P. Hall possibly being involved. Buchanan used the wagon on his Robbins Bros. Circus through September 1931 when the show closed prematurely and went to the Hall farm.

In December 1934 the former Robbins equipment was loaded out to be shipped to its new owners, Jess Adkins and Zack Terrell, who were

This photo of the Barnum-Buffalo Bill wagon was taken after it arrived in Rochester, Ind. in the fall of 1934, following its trip from the Hall Farm. Al Conover Col.





forming their new Cole Bros. Circus. One of the occupants of the flats leaving Lancaster was the old Robbins ticket wagon, now riding on conventional inside sunburst wheels.⁹ Adkins and Terrell did not use the wagon in 1935 or 1936, but for 1937 repaired the wagon, repainted it with pinstriping and scrolls and assigned it number 81. It was intended to use the wagon to carry an electric organ and P.A. system but when the organ didn't arrive by opening day Adkins cancelled it and the wagon never went on the road.¹⁰ Relegated to the wagon storage shed, it missed being in the

This wagon used by Buffalo Bill in 1896 is similar in design to those used after 1903 by Barnum & Bailey, but is not the same and should not be confused with those on the Barnum show. It does not have a higher floor line above the front wheels.

February 1940 fire that devastated much of the quarters. When the quarters property was taken over by a construction firm in 1942 it was moved a few miles outside of Rochester, in company with other Cole wagons, to the A.C. Bradley farm.¹¹ While at the farm it suffered

various indignities including having large wood screen windows put in the sides and conversion into a chicken coop. The wagon eventually rotted apart at the farm. Except for the sheet metal that had been nailed on years before it would have collapsed into an unrecognizable mass of rotted wood and iron as did the accompanying baggage wagons.

The wagon's undergear has since undergone considerable repair in the Museum's shop. Credit is due Fred D. Pfening, Jr., for pointing out the Barnum & Bailey-Buffalo Bill ticket wagon exchange.

1. *Bandwagon*, March-April 1968, p. 13.
2. *Bandwagon*, Sept.-Oct. 1964, back cover; September-October 1971, p. 22.
3. *Bandwagon*, May-June 1976, p. 10.
4. *Bandwagon*, Sept. Oct. 1964, p. 11.
5. *Bandwagon*, Jan. Feb. 1977, p. 15.
6. *Bandwagon*, Jan.-Feb. 1965, p. 15.
7. *Bandwagon*, March-April 1975, p. 11.
8. *Bandwagon*, May-June 1975, p. 4.
9. *Bandwagon*, May-June 1965, p. 6.
10. Gordon Potter; *Bandwagon*, May-June 1972, p. 21.
11. *Bandwagon*, May-June 1972, p. 22.

CIRCUS POST CARDS



WAGON DRAWN BY ELEPHANTS, RINGLING CIRCUS



BARNUM and Bailey Greatest Show on Earth



Barnum & Bailey's Circus Fire, May 21, 1910, Schenectady, N. Y.—No. 9



COW GIRLS, BILLYE BROS. RANCH



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MIRACLE**
WORLD'S WONDER BABY
BORN APRIL 15, 1910, SELLS
FLUTO CIRCUS WINTER QUARTERS
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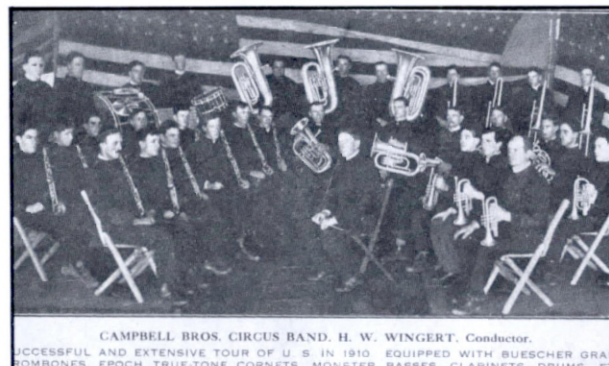


STREET SCENE, BARABOO, WIS.

*The circus has gone but we saw some of the
red mague.*



CHIEF IRON TAIL, INDIAN SQUAWS AND PAPOOSES
AT BUFFALO BILL'S WILD WEST

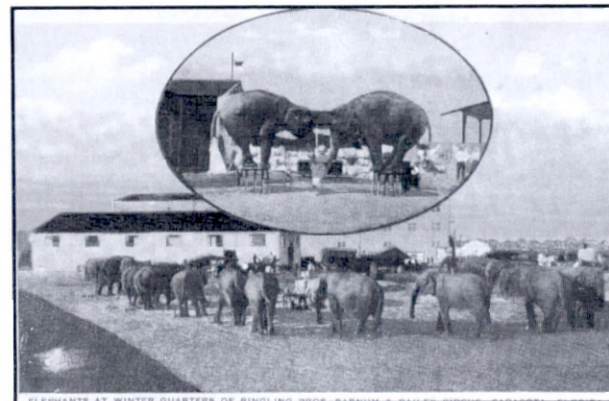


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